Men-at-Arms

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Latin American Wars 1900–1941

"Banana Wars," Border Wars & Revolutions

Philip S. Jowett • Illustrated by Stephen Walsh

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Latin American Wars 1900–1941

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Philip S. Jowett • Illustrated by Stephen Walsh
Series editor Martin Windrow

LATIN AMERICAN WARS 1900–1941

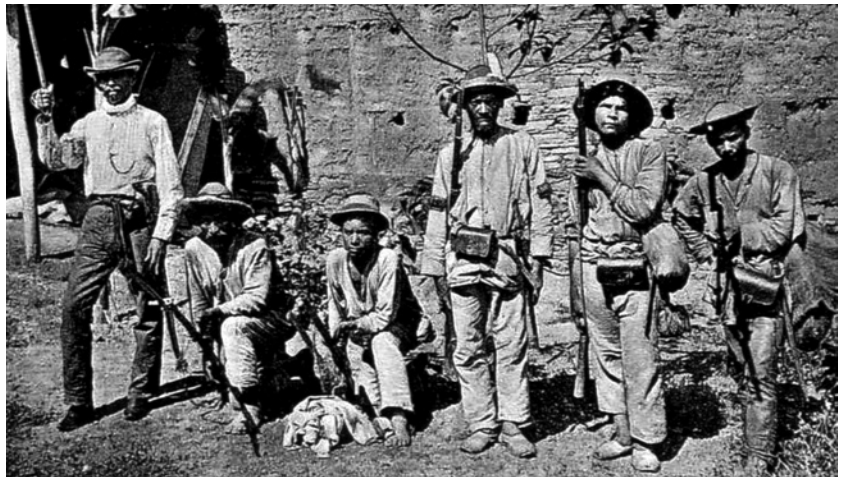
INTRODUCTION

Latin America in the first half of the 20th century was a region largely ignored by the European powers, with only the USA taking an active interest in its politics. Any conflict that took place in Latin America got few "column inches" in the world press, who were more concerned with their own wars – overwhelmingly, of course, with World War I, and the many conflicts that immediately preceded and followed it.

During the 19th century, the newly independent nations that emerged from Spanish and Portuguese colonial rule struggled to establish stable governments within mutually agreed borders. Military influence in most Latin American countries, usually in alliance with land-owning oligarchies, meant that democratic government was hard to achieve, always under threat, and usually short-lived. Weak or divisive governance led to civil and border conflicts that continued into the 20th century. During the period 1900–1941 there was a wide diversity of such clashes, which ranged from conventional operations by thousands of men to low-level guerrilla warfare involving a few hundred.

This book is intended simply to introduce the reader to the armies and wars of Mexico, Central America, and South America in this period. Although many countries were in a state of almost constant conflict in the first half of the century, others, such as Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile, were relatively stable. That being said, there was a military coup in Argentina in 1930, and a long-term political crisis in Chile in the early 1930s which almost sparked off a full-scale civil war. At the other extreme, the Central American state of Honduras suffered no fewer than 17 attempted uprisings, military coups, and revolutions between 1920 and 1923 alone.

Although to the wider world many of these Latin American conflicts seemed trivial, they were often of vital importance to the combatants. The conduct of warfare and the size of the armies involved were usually governed by a lack of available resources. Most countries in Latin America were poor, and economic realities limited the size, quality, and effectiveness of their armed forces. In a period of border conflicts, revolutions, and civil wars, the various governments and factions naturally wished to raise larger armies, but simply could not afford them. It was often hard enough to provide their troops with modern rifles, artillery, armored vehicles, and other modern equipment were always at a premium.



These guerrillas pictured in the early 1900s are Venezuelans, but could as easily belong to almost any Latin American army of the period. Their straw hats, rudimentary cotton uniforms, sandals, and elderly weapons and pouches are typical of the more impoverished nations of the region. The only visible insignia are sleeve patches displayed by the central man, and the officer (left) is little better clothed than his men. (US National Archives)

CENTRAL AMERICA, 1900–1911

The many wars fought in Central America between 1900 and 1911 are sometimes confusingly known as the "Banana Wars" – a derogatory term coined because the Central American states were often referred to as the "Banana Republics." (They were the main suppliers of that fruit to the USA, whose United Fruit Company was heavily involved in their internal affairs.) While some use "Banana Wars" to refer to the Central American wars in their entirety, others apply it only to US interventions in Central America and the Caribbean between 1900 and the early 1930s. Due to the strong US influence over the region in the early 20th century, the line between separate inter-state conflicts and US-led "Banana Wars" was often blurred. These civil and border conflicts mainly involved the three neighboring countries of Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador.

In 1906, Guatemala also fought a war against El Salvador, which opened with an invasion of Guatemala led by El Salvador's Minister of War, Tomas Regalado. Regalado was reported to have been drunk during the initial invasion, and his death at El Jicaro on July 11, 1906 ended the first phase of the war, which petered out in a stalemate. Regalado had been confused by the appearance of Guatemalan reinforcements wearing navy-blue service uniforms similar to those of his own soldiers. The enemy troops he had faced earlier had been wearing khaki, leading him to believe that these new arrivals were his own reinforcements.

While some described the whole war as merely a "skirmish," the fighting at El Jicaro cost the Guatemalans an estimated 2,800 dead while El Salvador suffered 700 killed and 1,100 wounded. In the primitive conditions of Central American warfare, a high proportion of the wounded would also have died within a few days. Both armies' losses should be seen in context: at that time the average Central American army had a strength of only between 3,000 and 6,000 men.

Another conflict broke out in February 1907, which saw Nicaraguan Liberal rebels allying themselves with the El Salvadorian and Honduran regular armies in order to oust the Nicaraguan President Zelaya. In the event, Zelaya's forces were successful in a particularly bloody three-day

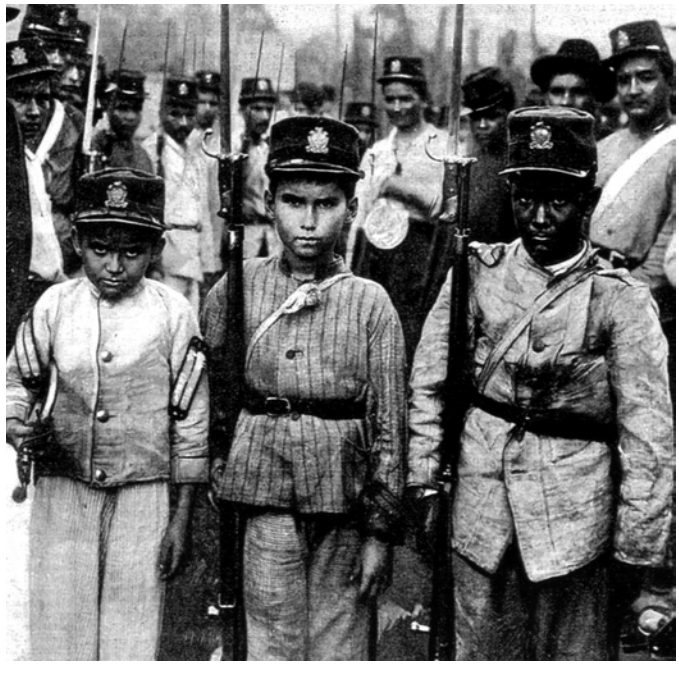
PREVIOUS PAGE
General Miguel Angel Ortez, a Nicaraguan *Sandinista* officer, posing for a studio photograph in 1930; he is armed with a Krag-Jorgensen M1898 rifle and a revolver, and note the method of carrying ammunition on his left leg. Eyewitnesses also described Ortez as wearing "puttees, black trousers, khaki shirt and a broad brimmed hat rolled up at the sides," and of being "perfumed and powdered, and rather well groomed." (Cody Images)

April 1931: Honduran government soldiers parade for their commander, Gen Aguilar, before going into battle against the rebels of Gen Diaz, who had just taken the northern town of Progresso. These Central American troops are still wearing a mixture of clothing and are armed with obsolete weapons. (Cody Images)

battle fought in March at Los Portillos de Namasique, which cost the lives of between 2,000 and 3,000 El Salvadorians, Hondurans, and Nicaraguan rebels; in terms of the proportion of casualties to the total numbers of troops involved, it was claimed to be the most costly in modern military history. The allied troops were killed mainly by the Maxim machine guns and Gatling guns of the Nicaraguan government forces. Over 1,000 allied troops were killed on the final day of the battle when they tried to rush entrenched Nicaraguan regulars, who also employed with devastating effect an 1872 Hotchkiss 37mm five-barrel revolving quick-firer, which could fire 68x 1lb explosive or canister rounds per minute into the tightly packed allied ranks.

Another battle decided by machine guns occurred during a civil war in Honduras in 1909–11, between the forces of President Miguel Danila and rebels led by his predecessor, Manuel Bonilla. The battle of La Ceiba on January 25, 1911 was fought between Davila's 5,000–7,000 government troops and a similar number of Bonilla's rebels under the command of an American soldier of fortune, Lee Christmas, who also had the services of two expert US machine-gunners, Joe Reed and Guy Molony (see below). Molony enabled the capture of the government army's only Krupp cannon by using a Colt-Browning M1895 "potato-digger"; other rebel machine guns were sited for interlocking fire, creating killing zones in which the attacking government troops suffered some 600 casualties (including their commander, Gen Guerrero, who was shot off his horse while trying to rally his men). An armistice was agreed on February 8, 1911; in October, Bonilla was once again elected president, but unrest persisted, and in January 1912 US Marines were landed to protect American property.

Photographed in 1903, Colombian boy soldiers pose with their adult comrades before operations against the rebellious province of Panama in Central America. They wear kepi-like shakos bearing the national coat-of-arms badge, and mixed civilian and military clothing – note the central figure's *rayadillo* jacket, and the NCO stripes worn by the boy at the far left. The rifles in the foreground seem to be French M1874 Gras single-shot, bolt-action breech-loaders. (US National Archives)



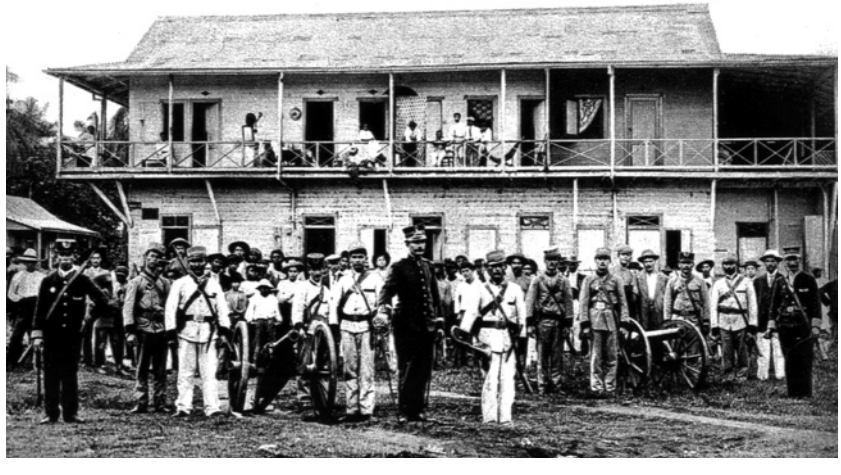
Unarmed Nicaraguan troops on parade in 1902, wearing typically motley cotton clothing, and a mixture of kepis with shallower, broader-topped visored caps. (US National Archives)

The armies

The Central American armies that fought these wars were often *ad hoc* forces raised for a particular campaign. In 1906, the Guatemalan Army was one of the strongest in the region, with 7,000 troops, but an estimated 57,000 potential reserves constituted the whole eligible male population of the country aged between 18 and 50. At the same time, El Salvador had a strength of only 500 regulars and a further 2,000 militia in reserve. Military service in these forces was not popular, but extreme poverty meant that there was no shortage of volunteers.

Weapons were usually old and often poorly maintained, and some men were armed only with machetes. The single-shot Remington "rolling-block" rifle was the most common type, seeing service with every Central American army. Others included Springfield percussion rifle-muskets dating from the 1860s, Winchester repeaters from the 1870s, and Krag-Jorgensen, Winchester, and Lee Navy rifles of the 1890s. Mauser rifles were a rarity due to their relatively high cost compared to surplus US weapons. Machine guns were usually old Gatling or Nordenfelt revolving types, or modern Maxim water-cooled, but the air-cooled Colt-Browning M1895 was the most popular; it was available in reasonable numbers following the 1898 Spanish-American War and the Philippines Insurrection.

Artillery was made up of light guns such as the German Krupp 75mm M1889 field gun and the 75mm L/24, which could easily be manhandled by the crew. Krupp had cornered the market in Central America since the 1870s, selling their guns to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. Between 1875 and 1903, Honduras also bought 38 Krupp guns of various field and mountain types. Another piece of light ordnance in widespread use was the Hotchkiss M1875 42mm breech-loading rifled mountain gun, which had served the US Army since the later Indian Wars and was sold off as surplus after the Spanish-American War. (Those sold to Central American armies were often wrongly identified by journalists as Krupp guns.)



Soldiers from the Central American state of Costa Rica parade outside a government building in 1910, with a pair of typical light, easily transported mountain guns. The troops wear kepis and a mixture of white and light khaki uniforms, the officers stiffened shakos and black or dark blue uniforms with bullion-braid rank rings round the cuffs. (Cody Images)

Foreign soldiers of fortune

The early 20th century Central American Wars saw the emergence into public notice of a number of foreign military adventurers, mainly Americans. These often larger-than-life characters included Lee Christmas, "Machine Gun" Molony, Tracy Richardson (see Plate A2), and Emil Holmdahl.

Lee Christmas was the forerunner of these soldiers of fortune, having served in Central America since the late 1890s. Born in Louisiana in 1863, he had been a railroad engineer amongst other jobs. He moved to Honduras in 1893 and worked on its railroad until 1897, when his train was captured by rebel troops. Looking for adventure, he willingly joined the rebel army and fought with them for two years before they became, in their turn, the government forces. His services were in high demand, and by 1902 he had achieved the rank of colonel in the Honduran Army. The following year he took the gamble of joining the rebel Gen Bonilla; this paid off when Bonilla became president and promoted Christmas to general's rank. Things went wrong for both of them in 1907 when Bonilla launched an ill-conceived invasion of neighboring Nicaragua. This failed dismally, and while Bonilla was absent at the front, he was overthrown.

"General" Christmas went into exile in Guatemala, but the two men kept in touch, and in 1910 they joined up again to launch a counter-revolution. Although this failed, a year later a better-organized rebellion succeeded, as already described. President Bonilla again rewarded Christmas with senior rank in his army, but the American was now beginning to suffer the effects of years of jungle warfare. When Bonilla was once again overthrown in 1913, the 50-year-old Christmas was too ill to continue his military career; he retired to the USA, where he died of tuberculosis in 1924.

The famous American soldier of fortune Lee Christmas, who fought in several of the Central American Wars in the first decades of the 20th century, poses for a studio portrait. He wore this gray corduroy uniform during his early service with the Honduran Army; later he was photographed wearing the ornate black dress uniform of a Honduran general. Note his plumed "Montana peak" campaign hat, riding boots, gauntlets, holstered semi-automatic pistol, and cutlass-like machete. Christmas and Guy "Machine-Gun" Molony were both originally hired by a Russian-born entrepreneur, Sam Zemurray, who was an ambitious competitor of the United Fruit Company, and worked to overthrow the Honduran government which it sponsored. (US National Archives)

Tracy Richardson (1892–1949) was perhaps an epitome of these adventurers, being hailed by some as "The Greatest Machine-Gunner in the World." Born in Nebraska, he arrived in Central America in 1909 and reached the rank of major in the Nicaraguan Army while still in his early 20s, mainly because of his machine-gun skills. He formed a close bond with Lee Christmas, but unlike his mentor he went north to fight in the Mexican Revolution from 1910. Richardson claimed to have served in the Venezuelan, Brazilian, Guatemalan, Mexican, Cuban, and Nicaraguan armies. A magazine article also stated that he had been wounded 16 times during his colorful military career. By 1915 he was serving on the Western Front, with Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (49th Bn, CEF).

Emil Lewis Holmdahl (1883–1963) was born in Iowa, and lied about his age to join the US Army during the Spanish-American War. He went on to serve in the Philippines in 1899, and then in China during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. When he was 22, he left the US Army and fought for Lee Christmas as a machine-gunner in the pro-Bonilla army of Honduras in 1907. Holmdahl continued to serve in Central American

Benjamin Zeledon (1879–1912) was one of the leaders of a revolution in 1912 against Nicaraguan President Adolfo Diaz, who was despised by many of his countrymen for being an American puppet supported by US Marines. Zeledon attacked US personnel on September 19, and four days later assumed leadership of the rising. He was killed at the battle of Coyotepe Hill on October 4, when his 350-strong force was defeated by 950 US Marines and sailors who recaptured Fort Coyotepe at the city of Masaya. In this photograph he is wearing civilian clothing with buttoned canvas gaiters, and armed with a machete and revolver; his only insignia is a blue-and-white hat ribbon. (US National Archives)

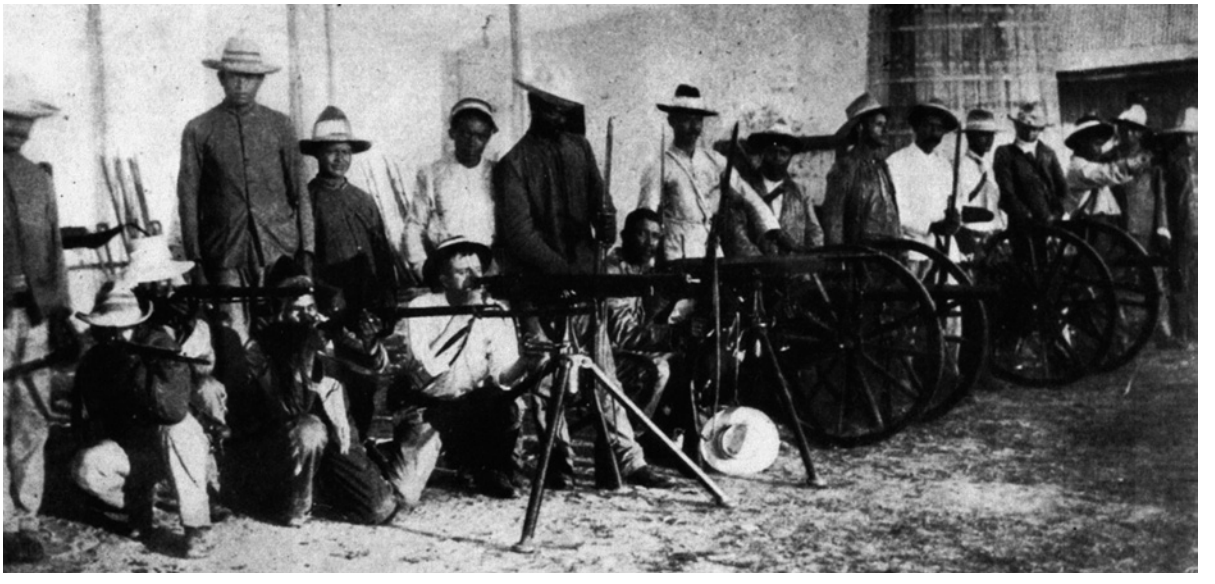
armies until the fall of 1909, when the odds appeared to have turned against the mercenaries (see below).

Sam Dreben (1878–1925), known as the "Fighting Jew," had also served during the Spanish-American War and the Philippines Insurrection. He joined Tracy Richardson with the US-financed rebels in Nicaragua, where he was taught to handle and maintain machine guns; keeping such a weapon operating in the humid climate of Central America was an art in itself. He was later given command of a rebel unit.

Guy "Machine Gun" Molony (1884–1972) was born in New Orleans, and reportedly his first overseas adventure was in South Africa during the Second Boer War. After it ended in 1902 he spent a while serving as a policeman in New Orleans, before traveling to Honduras and serving alongside Lee Christmas. In 1911, he was among the select band of machine-gunners who won the battle of La Ceiba for Bonilla. In 1920 he was home in New Orleans as superintendent of police, but the lure of Central America drew him back to Honduras in 1925. He stayed there until the early 1960s, serving a number of presidents and rising to become a wealthy plantation owner.

John Prentiss Poe was a Scottish-born adventurer who was another US Army veteran of the Spanish-American War. He joined the Honduran Army before the 1907 war with Nicaragua, and distinguished himself in the siege of Amaphal. A year later he moved south, and took part in the rebel Gen Mendez's expedition against the Venezuelan dictator Gen Castro. The following year Poe was killed in a skirmish, at the age of 41, and was buried in a jungle grave.

Although a handful of the foreigners involved in these wars were celebrated in the US press, there were many others who remain anonymous. During the war between the joint Guatemalan and Honduran armies and the Nicaraguans in 1909, there were as many as 400 US mercenaries serving in Central America; a minority fought for idealistic reasons, but most were simply attracted by the prospect of a well-paid adventure. Some US Army veterans of the Spanish-American War and the Philippines Insurrection had trouble adjusting to civilian life, and Central American armies offered foreigners with military skills plenty of chances for advancement. In 1910, one newspaper correspondent interviewed an Englishman who was dying of wounds, who told him that he had been a gunner in the Royal Navy. When he deserted off the Central American coast, he had immediately been offered a captain's commission in the Nicaraguan artillery.



A group of Honduran rebel *Manuelista* soldiers – supporters of Manuel Bonilla – pose after their victory at La Ceiba on January 25, 1911, when US mercenaries manning machine guns played a major part. The kneeling man in the white shirt posing with one of the Colt-Browning M1895s (center) is Guy "Machine Gun" Molony. All the men seen here wear what appears to be varied civilian clothing, but with blue-and-white hat bands. (US National Archives)

While some of these mercenaries were able to make their money and then head for home, others did not fare so well (the unhealthy climate and primitive conditions were always a danger). In 1909, both Sam Dreben and Tracy Richardson were badly wounded in battle; that was enough for Emil Holmdahl, who took a boat for New Orleans with his hard-earned savings. That same year, two other adventurers named Groce and Cannon were captured while laying mines in a river; they were unceremoniously shot and dumped in shallow graves. Some of these soldiers of fortune went on to ply their trade in the Mexican Revolution between 1910 and 1920; others, like Lee Christmas, remained committed to the fighting in Central America, but their influence waned over the next few years.

MEXICO, 1920–1939

The Mexican Federal Army

In many regions of the country, the formal end of the Mexican Revolution with the election of Gen Alvaro Obregón as president in September 1920 did not bring all fighting to an end. As in other nations following large-scale civil wars, the government's attempts to reduce the size of their postwar army also proved problematic. In 1920 the Federal Army had swollen to a strength of some 100,000 men, many of whom were semi-controllable irregulars. President Obregón reduced it by 40,000 over two years, and attempted to improve its professionalism. The pre-1910 military academy was reopened, and a staff college was established. One symbolic measure was the banning from barracks, in 1925, of "*soldaderas*" – the women who had performed the role of armed camp followers, accompanying their men on campaign and nursing the sick and wounded. This rather medieval role was now seen as being incompatible with a modern army.

Although many ordinary Mexican soldiers were more than happy to be demobilized in the early 1920s, their officers had much more to lose, and, with levels of government control over regional commanders varying,

Mexican Federal troops are seen at a railway station during one of the intermittent rebellions of the 1920s; to judge by the stacked carbines, they are cavalrymen. The uniforms have changed little since the Mexican Revolution; the troopers wear a variety of light khaki cotton uniforms, with either visored caps or cork sun helmets. According to the 1923 dress regulations, the sun helmet was to replace the field cap, but regulations were slow to take effect during this decade of military turmoil. Note (left foreground) the rifle belt equipment resembling the Mills patterns used by Britain and some other European armies. (Cody Images)

many simply refused to retire. By 1923 officers made up a ridiculous 20 percent of the almost 80,000-strong army, and before the end of the decade Mexico was to be disturbed by a number of rebellions led by discontented officers who refused to give up their ranks and associated privileges without a fight.

Federal Army rebellions, 1920–1929

The first large-scale revolt broke out in **December 1923**, when the former president Adolfo De La Huerta led a rising against the Obregón government. De La Huerta, disgruntled at being overlooked as a candidate for the presidency, had the support of about 23,000 troops and many of the conservative senior officers, who resented government measures to reduce their power.

The rebel leaders' anti-American stance brought the Federal government military aid from the USA; this was particularly channeled to the Air Force, which was staffed by more progressive officers. The service was equipped with US DH48 patrol aircraft which, adapted as bombers, proved effective against the rebels' forces and morale. Fighting was largely confined to the southwest of the country, and although the rebels captured the city of Puebla their advance on the capital from several directions soon faltered. Obregón recruited large numbers of new troops and received thousands of rifles and millions of rounds of ammunition from the USA. The rebels were soon short of both small-arms and artillery ammunition, and their commanders began to fall out amongst themselves as their shaky alliance crumbled. By February 1924, after several set-piece battles, the rebellion had run out of steam and its leaders were looking for ways to escape the firing squads. Obregón's victory was followed by brutal reprisals, with any captured rebel officer above the rank of major being shot. The president enacted his plan to reduce the size of the Army and get rid of many of the "old guard" officers; the rank-and-file were again reduced by 7,000, and 54 generals had been killed or had fled into exile. However, suppressing the rebellion had cost the government an estimated $30 million.

A further revolt broke out in **May 1927** led by two generals, Arnulfo Gomez and Francisco Serrano. Gomez occupied the port of Vera Cruz with a few thousand troops, while Serrano tried to launch a coup in Puebla. This half-hearted attempt was soon put down with the help of the ever-reliable Air Force. Serrano was captured and shot on October 3, and Gomez met the same fate on November 5. In total, an estimated 26,000 troops had joined the rebellion, but they were spread over several states and were defeated piecemeal by the loyalist forces.

The Escobar Rebellion of **March–April 1929** against the Calles government was the most threatening of the 1920s military revolts. It was led by one of the most popular Mexican commanders, Gen Gonzalo Escobar, in northern Mexico. He was supported by some 17,000 soldiers of the then 50,000-strong Federal Army, including many Yaqui Indians. A large number of female volunteers joined the rebellion, some returning to their previous frontline role. Escobar had a number of "tanks" built on tractor chassis as well as a few improvised armored cars. He also hired half a dozen US pilots at $1,000 per week, who formed the "Yankee Doodle Escadrille" with nine civilian biplanes and one Vought 02U Corsair. Large numbers of Federal troops had to be diverted from operations against the *Cristero* Rebellion (see below) to fight Escobar.

After securing several northern cities, the rebels moved southwards towards Mexico City, and the decisive battle of the war took place at Jimenez in Chihuahua, between about 8,000 of Escobar's rebel troops and 8,600 heavily entrenched Federal soldiers protected by electrified wire fences. The costly failure of a series of rebel cavalry charges decided what has been described by some as "the last battle of the Mexican

A Federal artillery crew take a break on the march during the 1923–24 Revolution. The gunners are wearing the usual mix of uniforms which was the result of years of sporadic supply from the central government. (Cody Images)

1927: a solemn young *Cristero* rebel posing for the camera with his Mauser carbine, presumably captured from a Federal trooper or policeman. Although he wears a straw sombrero and sandals, his shirt and jeans seem to be a cut above the clothing of the poorest peasants, and he may perhaps be a foreman or other senior hand employed and clothed by a landowner. His bandoliers carry several dozen rounds; later in the uprising, the Catholic rebels would suffer increasingly from shortage of ammunition. (Cody Images)

Revolution." Rebel troops withdrew into Sonora, where they were bombed by the Air Force, and the revolt ended in early May with the withdrawal of the rebel generals across the US border at Nogales. Casualties on the rebel side were some 2,000 dead and 6,000 captured.

OTHER REBELLIONS, 1926–1929:

The Yaqui Rebellion, 1926–1927

While the main opposition to the Federal government in the 1920s came from among its own generals, the decade also saw several risings springing from ethnic or religious tensions.

The indigenous Yaqui and Maya Indians had fought the Spanish for centuries before Mexican independence in the 1820s, and continued their struggles against the Federal government. Between 1903 and 1911 the Yaquis had suffered mass deportations which led to the deaths of up to 60,000 of their people. Yaquis had served in most Mexican armies during the 1910–20 Revolution, on promises of better treatment in its aftermath. Many of them had fought faithfully for the Constitutionalist army of Gen Obregón, but he had misled them about the land and other rewards they would receive when the war was over. These promises were not kept by the Federal government which he led from 1920; resentment built up, and in 1926 a full-scale rebellion broke out led by battle-hardened Yaqui veterans of the Revolution.

Taking place mainly in the state of Sonora, it saw brutal fighting between Federal regulars and Indian irregulars. The Yaquis fought courageously and inflicted heavy losses on the Army, especially on the garrisons of isolated outposts. By 1927 the suppression of the rebellion was reaching a brutal conclusion, with 12,000 Federal troops committed. Under the command of Gen Francisco Manzo, the Federal Army was supported by Air Force light bombers which, according to some reports, used poison-gas bombs. Yaqui leader Luis Matius led a group of his fighters into the Bacatete Mountains, where they held out until 1929. This small band was constantly harassed by Federal aircraft until, with little food and no hope of victory, they were forced to surrender. Any further risings by the Yaquis were on a small scale, and were dealt with brutally.

The *Cristero* Rebellion, 1927–1929

In the 1920s Mexico was deeply divided between an anti-clericalist government party and the traditionally devout Roman Catholic rural population. From 1924, the government of President Plutarco Calles began to apply and even to extend provisions of the 1917 Constitution that greatly limited the permitted activities of the clergy, imprisoning and killing priests and seizing Church property. The Catholic population in mid-western states such as Jalisco, Colima, and Nayarit had not been heavily involved in the 1910–20 Revolution, and the

Well-dressed and equipped middle-class *Cristero* officers pose with family members and troops, in front of their banner featuring the Virgin of Guadalupe. Both commanders, who may well be ex-officers of the Federal Army, display on their shirts several crosses and religious medallions as tokens of their devotion to the Roman Catholic Church, which was persecuted by the Calles government during 1924–29. (Cody Images)

persecution of the clergy stirred the peasantry and local landowners to take up arms. Known as *Cristeros* from their slogan "*¡Viva Cristo Rey!*" ("Long live Christ the King!"), the rebels began fighting government forces from January 1, 1927, provoking a campaign of repression in Jalisco led by Gen Jésus Maria Ferreira.

Numbering about 8,000 men at first, the *Cristeros* had an early success when they attacked a train, killing most of the passengers. This outrage led to government reprisals, which set the tone for the conflict; executions of clergy provoked assassinations of government supporters, and many civilians were killed on both sides. *Cristero* strength rose to 50,000 men and 10,000 women, with arms usually taken from government garrisons. It was estimated that by November 1927 some 40 percent of the *Cristero* fighters carried captured Mauser rifles and carbines, although some were still armed only with machetes and farm tools. Women and girls as young as 14 who supported the *Cristeros* joined "Saint Joan of Arc" units, which generally provided logistical and medical support but would fight if necessary.

The Federal response was to form up to 100 special mobile columns, raised both from among the ranks of the 80,000-strong Federal Army and from local volunteers – the regulars were supported by pro-government militias known as the Social Defense Forces and the "Agragists." Each column had up to 1,000 troops with all available equipment, including trucks and tractor-drawn artillery, and some were supported by aircraft. These columns laid waste to large areas, with no quarter given on either side; in Tabasco, Gen Tomás Garrido became particularly notorious. Any cleric who supported the *Cristeros* could expect to be stood against a wall and shot like any other rebel.

With a large part of the rural population behind them, the *Cristeros* achieved a number of successes, but, like most popular uprisings lacking external support and facing a determined army, the rebellion was doomed to fail. Keeping 20,000–25,000 fighters supplied in the field proved difficult, ammunition ran short, and by May 1928 the *Cristeros'* active strength was reduced to about 12,000. Their defeat was delayed when the

The Federal Army crew of an 8mm Hotchkiss M1914 medium machine gun fitted with a shoulder stock, photographed in action against rebel forces in 1929. Again, their uniforms are the non-regulation mixture typical of troops stationed far from logistic centers, and they wear both a "stetson" and straw hats. (Cody Images)

Federal Army had to respond to the Escobar Rebellion in March 1929 (see above), but this respite did not last long. The death of *Cristero* leader Gen Enrique Gorostieta in June 1929 was quickly followed by a truce on June 21, largely due to the efforts of US ambassador Dwight W. Morrow. Tired and hungry *Cristero* bands surrendered their arms and went back to their villages, where church services were again permitted. The rebellion had cost almost 90,000 dead; remarkably, the rebels inflicted nearly twice the losses they suffered, with estimates of 57,000 Federals killed to some 30,000 *Cristeros*.

The Cedillo Rebellion, 1938–1939

From 1934, President Lázaro Cárdenas carried out land, educational, and social reforms, and built upon the efforts of previous governments to finally eliminate the independent powers of regional military commanders – the *caudillos* or *caciques*. By 1938 the only remaining military strongman was Gen Saturnino Cedillo at San Luis Potosi, who launched a rebellion in May that year. Cedillo enjoyed a measure of genuine support in his state, and was said to have 25,000 armed peasants behind him. He had been preparing for possible trouble for several years, but his attempts to purchase rifles abroad led to his shipments being seized by the government. When a Federal Army force with air support was sent against him, most of Cedillo's supporters either deserted him openly or simply melted away, and he took to the hills with his private army. Although the fighting went on for the rest of 1938, he and his men were basically fugitives. Cedillo was cornered by Federal troops in January 1939, captured, and swiftly executed, thus effectively ending 28 years of civil conflict in Mexico.

CENTRAL AMERICA, 1921–1933

Costa Rica & Panama: The Coto War, 1921

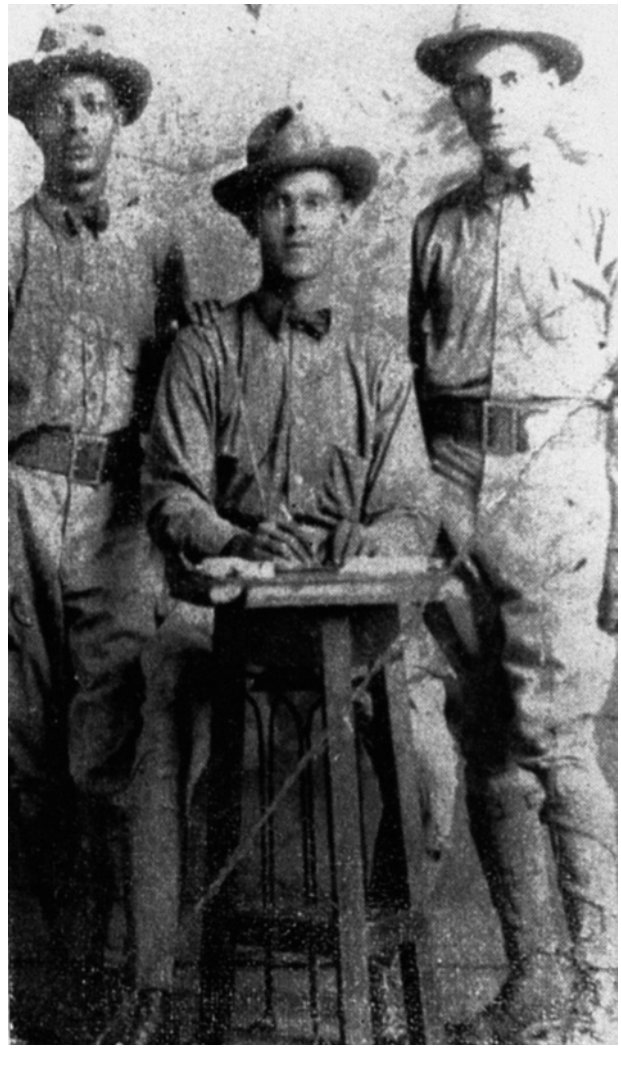
This clash between Costa Rica and Panama, its neighbor to the south on the Central American isthmus, was interesting only in being a typical low-level border conflict involving only small numbers of troops. Both countries were completely ill-prepared for war, and their leaders were naive about its realities.

Panama had been a province of Colombia on the South American mainland since independence from Spain in the early 19th century, but had enjoyed some autonomy. When a Colombian regime tightened its grip Panama broke away, with US encouragement; this allowed the construction of the strategic Panama Canal across the narrow isthmus. Following independence in November 1903, the former army had been disbanded under US pressure in 1904, with its personnel joining a newly organized National Guard.

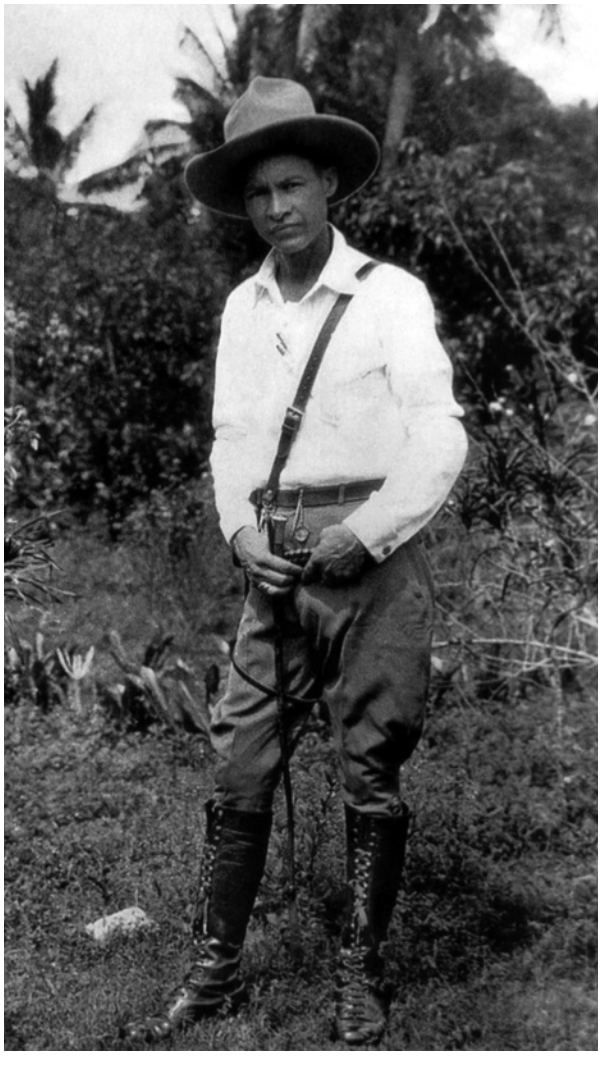
Ever since independence from Spain, the area around the town of Coto in northwestern Panama's Chiriqui province had been claimed for southern Costa Rica's Puntarenas province. It had been awarded to Costa Rica by international arbitration in 1914, but Panama had rejected this decision. When Costa Rica took matters into its own hands on February 21, 1921 and sent a force under Col Héctor Zuñiga across the border, Panama had to improvise a defense quickly. In the patriotic fervor which swept through Panama a number of volunteer units were raised. These included the "Primera de Voluntarios de David," and the "Joan of Arc Company" formed by university students, which did not reach the frontline.

When the National Guard was mobilized it could initially call upon only 50 rifles and 60,000 cartridges hidden in the cellars of the presidential palace. The authorities also purchased 50 carbines from a private company, Arias & Duque Ltd. During the two-week war Panamanians did capture some Springfield M1903s with 60 rounds each from the Costa Ricans; they also captured a Costa Rican vessel, the *Sultana*, which yielded 30 prisoners, 25 brand new Mausers, and a single machine gun with 6,000 rounds. The regular Costa Rican Army in 1921 numbered a paltry 400 men, but had enough weaponry to arm an expanding volunteer force – several thousand Mauser rifles, dozens of machine guns, and several artillery pieces, left over from a time when their army had been much larger.

On the southern front around Coto, some 2,000 Costa Ricans were eventually opposed by a motley Panamanian force of 1,700 National



Three volunteers for the Panamanian Army are seen in this poor-quality photograph taken at the time of the Coto War with Costa Rica in 1921. Their uniform seems to consist of a "stetson" hat, a shirt worn with a dark bow tie, and tapered military trousers with (right) tall strapped gaiters in brown leather. No insignia were recorded for their uniforms at the time, and photographs give little clue. The colors of Panama's flag were the same red-white-blue as that of Costa Rica, so a simple ribbon would not be sufficient identification. (US National Archives)



Augusto César Sandino (1895–1934), the leader of the Nicaraguan rebels in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Sandino was regarded as a patriotic hero by many, but as a bandit leader by conservative Nicaraguans and the US government that supported them. Sandino's guerrilla army never grew above a few hundred men, and most battles in 1927–33 involved less than 1,000 men on both sides. Here he wears the archetypal felt hat with a "Montana peak," a captured US Marine white shirt, khaki riding breeches, and high lace-up boots; he has a pistol or revolver holster tied down to his right thigh, and carries a riding crop. (Cody Images)

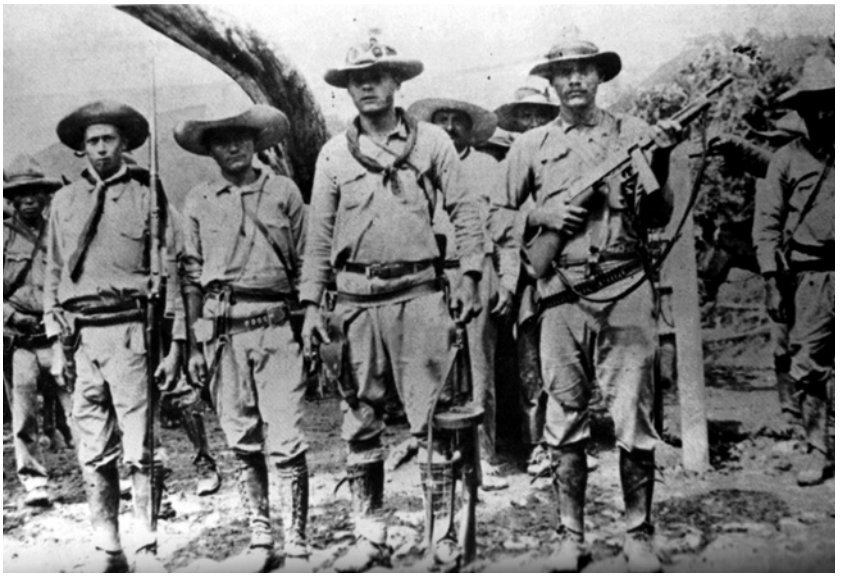
Guardsmen, police, and volunteers, which was scrambled together piecemeal and transported to the front by coastal steamer. A couple of roughly company-sized actions over February 25–27 ended with Coto back in Panamanian hands. However, about 1,000 Costa Ricans also landed in the more northern province of Bocas del Toro, where they faced only a handful of Panamanian irregulars. The war ended on March 5, under US pressure, and although the Panamanians had recaptured Coto the Americans insisted that they honor the 1914 decision and hand it over to Costa Rica.

Nicaragua: the Sandino Rebellion, 1927–1933

Like most other Central American nations, Nicaragua in the 1920s was ruled by an autocratic regime. Since the early 1900s the country had seen a series of interventions by US Marines to support various inept but pro-US governments. Nicaraguan Liberal opposition to the US presence over the years culminated in a widespread rebellion in 1925. This was followed by a year-long "Constitutionalist War" between Liberals led by Juan Batista Sacasa and the pro-US Conservatives of President Adolfo Diaz, which ended in May 1927 in a treaty brokered by the USA. Only one of the factional leaders rejected its terms; Liberal commander Gen Augusto Cesar Sandino refused to surrender, and led a small band of fighters to the Honduran border. There he set up bases, and began to wage a guerrilla war against the new government and its US sponsors. Defiantly declaring war on the hated "Colossus of the North," Sandino claimed to have 3,000 armed troops, but in reality he could rarely put more than 300–400 into the field, and most engagements involved only about 100–150 men on each side.

Sandino knew that he could not hope for a military victory, but might instead win a propaganda war and wear down the US government's political will to continue. His stand against the USA brought him support from the USSR and other sympathizers, and within the USA there was also opposition to the US Marines' role from the American Communist Party and other left-wingers. Sandino's profile was raised, and – unsurprisingly – he was both condemned by his enemies as a bandit and hailed by sympathizers as a heroic revolutionary leader.

Most of the fighting against Sandino's forces was done by the US Marine contingent (largely from the 5th Marines), whose strength in Nicaragua fluctuated between about 1,500 in 1926, to 2,500 in 1928, and then to 5,000 by early 1929. In parallel with their operational role they trained the Nicaraguan National Guard, and the rest of 1929 saw a steady decline in USMC numbers as the successful war against Sandino was pursued by local



A fairly uniform-looking squad of *Sandinista* fighters, wearing khakis and various leather gaiters and boots probably captured from National Guard or USMC stores; a couple wear red-and-black or red neckerchiefs. Their headgear includes campaign hats and "stetsons" of various sizes. Note (center & right foreground) two Thompson submachine guns, one with the cumbersome 50-round drum and one with a 20-round box magazine. Both these M1928A1 guns have the horizontal forearm popularly associated with the later M1 model, rather than the vertical forward pistol-grip. All these guerrillas seem to carry secondary sidearms. (Cody Images)

forces. By May 1929 there were 3,100 Marines in Nicaragua, by July 2,555, and by August 1,300. An important element for the Marines was the air support they received; their air unit in-country initially had only six scout planes, but by 1933 totaled 26 aircraft of various types.

Nicaraguan government forces were made up mainly of a National Guard which at first numbered 600 men, trained and armed by the US Marines. By 1929 the National Guard had risen to a strength of 2,000 all ranks, who were fairly well trained and were armed with Springfield M1903 rifles and light and heavy machine guns. They were supported by a few

Nicaraguan conservative volunteers photographed in the field during an anti-*Sandinista* offensive in 1929. These irregulars are poorly dressed in civilian clothes with blankets, but have been issued Krag-Jorgensen rifles. Their khaki-uniformed officer sits on the low stone position for an elderly mountain gun, writing notes with a map spread on his lap. (US National Archives)

A US Marine officer (second left) photographed with a group of Nicaraguan National Guard officers displaying a mixture of uniforms; the one at the right wears khaki, the others darker cotton uniforms with khaki hats. In the left background are a number of *Guardia Voluntarios*; under magnification, both infantry and riders can be seen to sport white hat bands. (US National Archives)

hundred poorly armed and semi-trained volunteers known as the *Guardia Voluntarios*. There were also a few independent armed bands made up of Conservative supporters from the previous Constitutionalist War; these irregulars were vehemently anti-Sandino, and little mercy was shown to captives by either side.

Sandino's men were renowned as being poor shots, which was largely due to the poor quality and careless maintenance of their rifles, and a lack of ammunition for target practice. Sandino did not appear to have worried too much about his followers' lack of military skills; he was well aware of their shortcomings, and avoided direct battle whenever possible. By March 1928, his force was broken up into three "mobile columns" with a total of only 80 troops, six officers, ten bodyguards and his personal retinue. In June 1929 Sandino decided to suspend operations for a while and travel to Mexico to raise support for his cause. He returned in 1930 to renew his struggle, but the next few years saw a steady decline in his fortunes. Several of his lieutenants gave up the hopeless fight, and in 1933 a US-brokered election saw the Liberal victory of President Sacasa. With little justification for continuing his military campaign, Sandino agreed to make peace with the new government.

One of Sandino's tactics had been to exaggerate the strength of his forces, and always to remove casualties from the battlefield to disguise his losses. The reality was revealed in 1933 when his troops handed in most of their weapons; the figures recorded were six shotguns, 335 rifles, eight Thompson submachine guns, eight Browning Automatic Rifles, nine Browning heavy machine guns, two Lewis light machine guns, and only 3,129 rounds of ammunition.

Although he had made peace, Sandino was seen by his right-wing enemies as too much of a potential threat, and his assassination in 1934 was duly organized by the commander of the National Guard, Gen Anastasio Somoza. The National Guard immediately tracked down any remaining rebel bands, and destroyed them all in little over a month.

Two years later, Gen Somoza led a military coup which overthrew the elected Liberal government; he then established a brutal regime which lasted for over 40 years, and was inherited by his son after he himself was assassinated.

The Sandino Rebellion was costly to Nicaragua, especially along the Caribbean coast; it also disrupted the mining industry when Sandino's forces targeted mines and kidnapped some owners and their families. Combat deaths during the rebellion were estimated at 1,115 rebels, 136 US Marines and 75 National Guardsmen. After his death Sandino's name was largely forgotten outside left-wing Latin American circles; it would come to the fore again in 1978–79, when the guerrillas who overthrew Somoza Junior's regime adopted the title of "*Sandinistas*."

BRAZIL, 1922–1932

The Brazilian Federal Army

Brazil was a vastly larger and richer country than those of Central America, and during World War I the Brazilian Federal Army had sent a small token contingent to the Western Front to fight on the side of the Entente. At the end of the war in 1918 the Army had 41,564 men, which had risen to 51,785 by 1923. By 1925, the infantry was made up of 13 regular regiments, 26 light regiments and three mounted infantry battalions, and there were 20 cavalry regiments of various types. The artillery had eight heavy and ten medium regiments, and one mixed regiment, plus five mountain artillery and six horse artillery groups.

Brazilian Federal Army officers in the mid-1920s, wearing khaki uniforms in a variety of shades. The "stetsons" were known as *pampas* hats, after the southern plains where this type of headgear was traditional. The officer in the darker wool greatcoat appears to have belt-and-suspender pistol equipment made of canvas webbing rather than leather. (Cody Images)

However, the morale and prestige of the Brazilian Army in the 1920s was at a low ebb; favoritism by the northern land-owning oligarchy that dominated governments distorted promotions, and equipment and training had been neglected. Military service was avoided by all classes of society whenever possible; for instance, of 73,250 draftees in 1925, nearly 60,000 failed to report at the recruitment centers. Two years later the situation had slightly improved, but still only 50 percent of the 49,000 men drafted reported for duty. Rebellions within the Army in the 1920s further weakened its performance, with many of its lower and middle-ranking officers discontented.

By 1930 the frontline strength was 58,000, but in theory this could rapidly be expanded to 120,000 in time of war, and "on paper" full mobilization would produce a total of 270,000 men – though this total would include the various state militias and irregular "private armies," whose loyalty was to their state rather than to Brazil. The size of the state militias varied greatly from the richer to the poorer states, with São Paulo having a particularly large force with its own air arm. In 1932 the Federal Army had 34,700 infantry, 10,750 cavalry, 8,700 artillery, and 4,300 military police. Officially the state militias totaled an additional 33,000 men, but this was an estimate, since state governors often did not want the government to know how many troops they controlled. Although the government tried to modernize their armed forces in the 1930s, this was not always successful. For example, the armored force in the 1920s consisted of a single company of French surplus FT-17 light tanks, which was disbanded in March 1932. Eventually the old tanks were replaced with new Italian CV33/35s, but these "tankettes" were too poorly armed and armored to be effective.

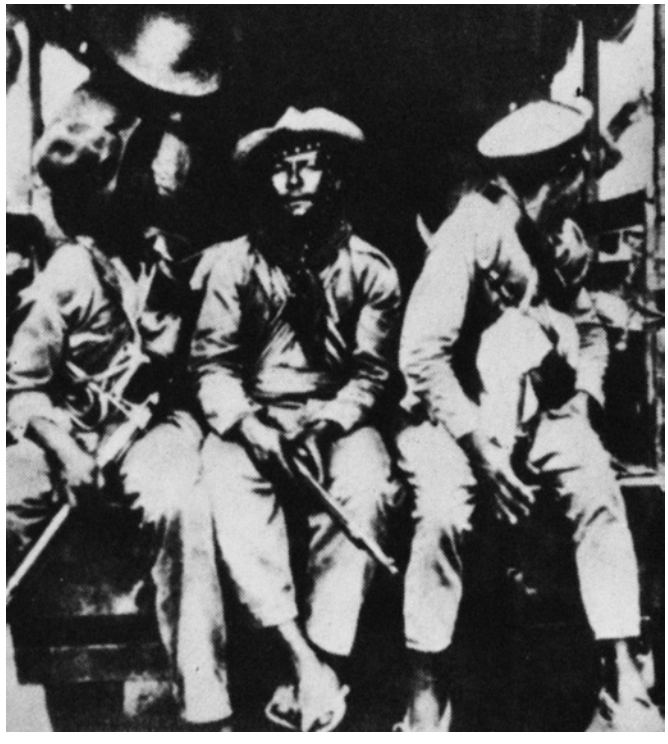
Brazilian Federal troops on the streets of a city during the 1930 Revolution. After a number of military-led rebellions since 1922, the Army's leadership more or less collapsed in 1930, and rebels took control of at least half of Brazil's 20 states. These soldiers are wearing their greatcoats over light khaki uniforms, and have blankets over their shoulders; note the tall gaiters, and Mills-type belt-and-suspender equipment. The banner is the national flag of Brazil, presumably bearing the designation of their regiment. (Cody Images)

Army rebellions, 1922–1927

During the 1920s the Brazilian government was challenged on several occasions from within the ranks of the Federal Army. In **November 1922**, a revolt was planned mainly by

junior officers who were unhappy with the result of that year's presidential election. In most places the rising never really got off the ground, with only the garrison of the Copacabana Fort outside Rio de Janeiro prepared to fight. The 300 rebels in the fort were soon isolated by loyalist troops, and many were allowed to leave by their former comrades. A hard core of 29 junior officers decided to make a defiant and symbolic march on Rio, but casualties reduced this number further to just 18 men. Their suicidal "march of death" was faced by 3,000 Federal soldiers, and when the confrontation took place only two rebels survived.

Other officers, realizing that their association with the failed rebellion had blighted their careers, had nothing to lose by continuing to plot the overthrow of the government. In **summer 1924** a second, so-called "*Tenentes*' (Lieutenants') Revolt" broke out in the southern states of São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul. This, and a simultaneous but abortive Navy revolt, were soon defeated, but this time its leaders chose to retreat into the jungle, forming a mobile column which adopted the name of its leader, Capt Luis Carlos Prestes. (Prestes had been one of the planners of the 1922 revolt, but illness had prevented his taking part.) The "Prestes Column" started its campaign with 2,000 men, but its strength dwindled, and by March 1925 the 800 who remained decided to join up with another rebel column formed in the state of São Paulo. This "Paulista Column" had recently been defeated by Federal forces, and Prestes now took command of the combined force of some 1,200 men.



Brazilian rebels move up to the front during the 1930 Revolution. They wear a mixture of military and civilian clothing, and the man in the center has a spotted bandana tied around his head under his hat. Away from the main cities, banditry was rife in Brazil in the early 20th century, and keeping the peace was often left to poorly equipped and semi-disciplined irregular troops like these. (Cody Images)

During their epic 30-month campaign, the Prestes Column marched a total of 15,500 miles through jungles, mountains, and disease-ridden swamps over 13 states, fighting any Federal units that opposed them. During their march through northeastern Brazil they were also opposed by local pro-government irregulars, including former bandits formed into so-called "Patriotic Battalions" – who were happy to exchange their worn-out Winchesters for modern Mausers, and to receive regular pay, uniforms, and equipment. In general, however, these units proved to be of little value; most of their men deserted, taking with them their prized Mausers.

Although the Prestes Column often managed to defeat the various units sent against them, their morale suffered after more than two years of wandering. Apart from constant military opposition and a chronic shortage of ammunition and other military supplies, the column faced increasing hunger and disease, and by late 1926 only about 600 of the 800 men who remained were fit to fight. With their spirits at a low ebb, a total of 620 men chose to give up the fight in 1926 and escaped across the Brazil-Bolivia border. The last remnants of the Prestes Column

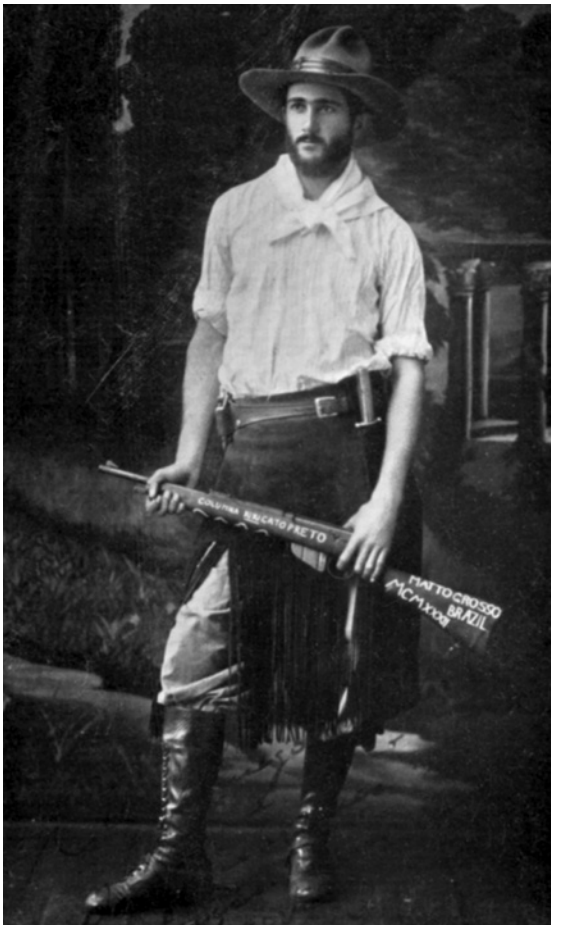
November 1930: Brazilian Federal artillerymen aim a 75mm field gun towards rebel lines from the southern border of São Paulo state, at the beginning of an offensive into the neighboring state of Parará. All the gun crew wear the distinctive *capacete de lona* or "canvas helmet," an unstiffened cloth version of the cork sun helmet which was in widespread service in Brazil. Easy and cheap to produce, the canvas version could be worn with the brim folded either down or partly up, as seen here. (Cody Images)

crossed the border by March 1927; this party of 65 rebels had only 20 Mausers between them, as well as a few worn-out machine guns. Their exile heralded a period of relative peace, before a further and massive revolution in 1930 marked a watershed in Brazilian history.

The 1930 Revolution

This broke out in the depths of the worldwide Great Depression, when the presidential election in March brought victory for the government-supported candidate, Júlio Prestes (no relation), the governor of São Paulo state; however, he was prevented from taking office. Opposition by supporters of losing candidate Getúlio Vargas eventually led to a revolt on October 3, which spread in days to ten of the 20 Brazilian states. This deep division was also reflected in the Federal Army, with some 80,000 troops supporting Vargas and 100,000 defending the government. Rebel armies advanced from the north and south towards the capital, Rio de Janeiro, and clashed with government forces at Quatiguà on October 12–13. The loyalist troops were heavily defeated in a 5-hour battle, and by the end of the month Vargas' rebel forces controlled the whole of northeastern Brazil. On October 24 a military junta took power in Rio de Janeiro in a vain attempt to forestall the revolution, but when the triumphant Vargas arrived in Rio on November 1 the city had already been secured by a 3,000-strong advance force. The junta handed over power on November 3; Vargas was to remain in control until 1945, and dominated Brazilian politics

until the 1950s. (His modernizing regime soon became authoritarian, and former military rebel Luis Carlos Prestes would become a leading Communist opponent of his government.)



A rebel commander from the Brazilian state of Matto Grosso poses with what appears to be a Lee Enfield rifle cut down to carbine length. During the 1932 Revolution there were limited uprisings in a few other states in support of that in São Paulo. This officer's clothing includes the Constitutionalists' white neckerchief. The appearance of distorted proportions is caused by his wearing, belted at the waist to hang over his trousers, the fringed *chiripá* recalling the traditional costume of the *gaucho* cowboys of southern Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina. (Cody Images)

The 1932 São Paulo Revolution

The supporters of the 1930 Revolution in São Paulo state were unhappy with their share of the political spoils under the new Vargas regime, which also failed to honor elements of the 1891 Constitution and adopted virtually dictatorial powers. In April 1932 Vargas announced an election to be held in 1933, but this failed to mollify the leaders in São Paulo; initially known as "Paulistas," they began planning for a counter-revolution. They hoped to garner support from other Brazilian states whose leaders were also hostile to Vargas, and to help unite the opposition they planned to give command of the rebel forces to the commander of the Matto Grosso state militia, Gen Klinger. Klinger was expected to bring 5,000 of his militiamen to São Paulo, complete with artillery and 13 million rounds of ammunition. When he arrived, however, he was accompanied only by his entourage of staff officers, with no troops and none of the crucial artillery.

Despite this crucial setback, the revolution was duly launched in São Paulo on July 9, 1932, and by next day the city was in rebel hands. The Paulistas were joined by most of the Federal 2nd Infantry Division stationed in São Paulo, which would form the backbone of their army alongside the state militia (*Forca Publica*). The expected risings against the Vargas government in the states of Minas Geraes, Rio Grande do Sul, and Paraiba did not take place, and the war was now, in effect, between São Paulo state and the rest of Brazil.

The Federal government forces, known at the time as *Legalistas,* had a strength of 53,000 regular troops. These were joined by almost 30,000 militiamen from various Brazilian states, who arrived in Rio de Janeiro during the war to support Vargas. Government artillery totaled 150 French and German medium field guns, though heavy ordnance was

São Paulo, 1932: gunners of the Constitutionalist rebel army (note the white neckerchief) manhandle one of their 25 precious field guns into position. Most rebel troops wore the khaki uniform of the *Forca Publica* state militia, but new uniforms were ordered in large numbers during the brief war. All these men seem to wear the same helmet, one of two locally made versions of the French Adrian. (Cody Images)

limited to two railway guns which were constructed with guns taken from the Brazilian battleship *Minas Geraes*. Crucially, the Legalistas had the support of the Navy, with its two battleships, two cruisers, ten destroyers, and four submarines.

Their Army and Navy air arms also enjoyed superiority over the rebels, with 61 military aircraft by the end of the fighting. The Army had mainly French aircraft, the Navy US, Italian, and British types; they also obtained a number of Waco C90s to use as fighters, but problems with locally made ammunition limited these to bombing and reconnaissance. The rebel air arm eventually operated about 40 machines, of mainly civilian types but including a few Potez 25 and Waco CSO. Their best aircraft were a handful of Curtiss Falcons, which achieved a damaging raid on a Legalista airfield on September 21.

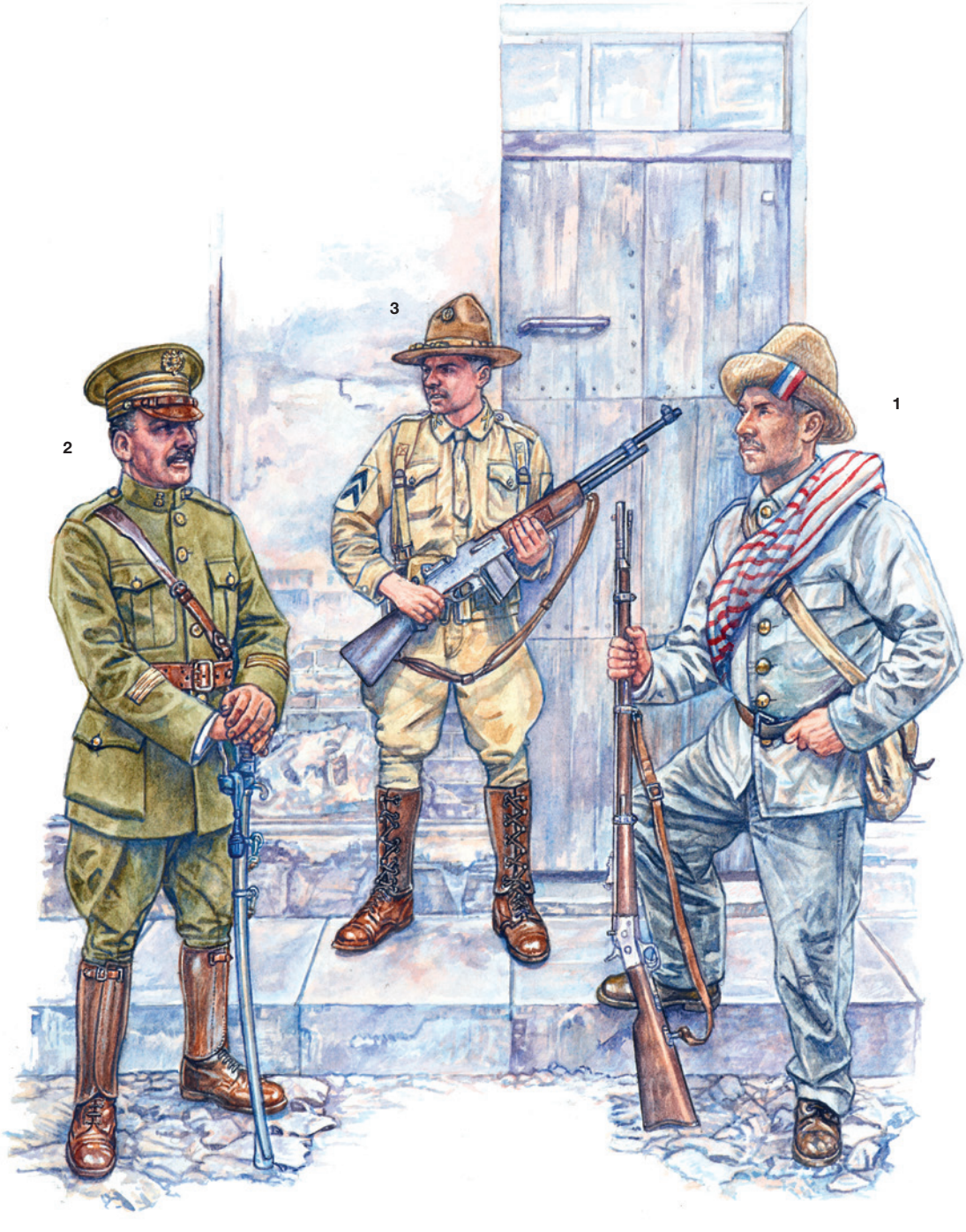
During the Revolution the rebel forces became known as the *Constitutionalistas*, since they claimed to be fighting to uphold the 1891 Constitution. When the local military authorities began to enlist volunteers for the Consitutionalist army some 200,000 turned up at recruitment centers, but lack of available weapons greatly limited the forces they could put in the field. However, the Constitutionalist leaders must have had high ambitions for the future size of their forces, to judge by the fact that they ordered no fewer than 440,000 uniforms to be produced.

When the fighting began, thousands of volunteers were given a week's training before being transported to the front. The Constitutionalist army had some 24,000–25,000 troops, and reservists took the "paper" total to about 80,000, but despite São Paulo's large industrial base it proved impossible to manufacture rifles, and the Brazilian Navy blockade

(continued on page 33)

CENTRAL AMERICAN WARS 1900–1911
1: Private, Honduras, Namasique, 1907
2: Tracy Richardson, Nicaragua, 1909
3: Private, El Salvador, 1906

MEXICAN REBELLIONS, 1920s
1: Machine-gunner, 70th Regt, 1924
2: *Cristero* commander, 1927
3: *Soldadera*, Sonora, 1927



CENTRAL AMERICA & CUBA, 1920–1930s
1: Volunteer, Costa Rica, Coto War, 1921
2: Captain, Engineers, Guatemala, 1920
3: Corporal, Cavalry, Cuba, 1933

NICARAGUA: SANDINO REBELLION, 1926–1934
1: Volunteer, *Guardia Voluntarios*, 1929
2: *Sandinista* officer, 1928
3: Guardsman, *Guardia Nacional*, 1927

BRAZILIAN REBELLIONS, 1920s
1: Federal Police, Alagoas, 1927
2: Rebel standard-bearer, *"Columna Da Morte,"* 1924
3: *Gaucho* lancer, Rio Grande do Sul, 1923

BRAZILIAN REVOLUTIONS, 1930s
1: Private, 2nd Inf Regt, Federal Army, 1930
2: Standard-bearer, *Forca Publica*, São Paulo, 1932
3: Volunteer, "Black Legion," São Paulo, 1932

THE LETICIA INCIDENT, 1932–1933
1: Lieutenant, Colombian Light Artillery, 1932
2: Senior private, *Brigada Mixta de Montana*, Peru, 1933
3: Private, Colombian Infantry, 1933

THE ZARUMILLA WAR, 1941
1: Corporal, Peruvian Infantry
2: Corporal, Ecuadorian Infantry
3: Peruvian tank commander

Brazilian *Constitutionalista* troops manning a trench facing advancing government *Legalistas*. All three wear khaki cotton shirts, but their headgear is typically varied: a felt "stetson," a local copy of the Adrian helmet with a "pommel" at the apex, and a civilian straw hat. The light machine gun is a Hotchkiss M1922; passed over by the French Army, it was exported in several versions and calibers from 6.5mm to 8mm. This example is one of the strip-fed variants; Spain also bought a magazine-fed version in 7mm. (Cody Images)

prevented imports. This meant that rifles often had to be shared; one volunteer in a frontline position reported that he had to share his with no fewer than six of his comrades.

They had only 25 artillery pieces, but otherwise São Paulo's well-developed heavy industry was able to supply the Constitutionalist forces with home-made weaponry. Local factories built several armored trains, improvised armored cars, "tanks" built on agricultural tractors (including a single flame-throwing example), and armored river gunboats. They produced Stokes-type mortars, grenades, shells for their few artillery pieces, and mines to protect the coastal ports. At least three types of steel helmets were also produced in the state's workshops.

When the fighting began, the Constitutionalist 2nd Division advanced northwards along the Paraibo Valley to the border with the state of Rio de Janeiro. They had the then largely undefended Brazilian capital potentially at their mercy, but they stopped their advance at the border and began to dig defensive entrenchments. This failure of nerve would doom the Constitutionalist cause, and the Federal 1st Division (Gen Gois Monteiro) soon advanced to block any further advance.

The war was fought on three fronts: the Minas Gerais Front in the north, the Coastal Front in the east, and the Southern Front. The Constitutionalist entrenchments were often lightly defended for lack of troops, and when the Legalistas attacked they were easily able to outflank the poorly sited rebel defenses. Some observers compared the opposing trenches to the Western Front during World War I, and the commanders

A smartly uniformed Peruvian Civil Guard stands guard over some mutinous regular soldiers at the time of the Leticia Incident in 1932–33. Alongside small units of regulars and civilian volunteers, the Civil Guard played a large part in the fighting in this brief jungle campaign on the border between Peru and Colombia. (Cody Images)

of both armies certainly seemed willing to sacrifice their troops needlessly with little hope of gaining much ground. Attacks on the rebel positions on the Northern and Southern Fronts by the Legalista army with air support wore down the rebel defenders, while the blockade and naval attacks along the Atlantic coastline increased the pressure. In the south, where some 18,000 Legalistas of the 3rd and 5th Divisions, three cavalry divisions, and a *Gaucho* brigade faced at most 5,000 rebel troops, the government achieved a breakthrough at Itararé as early as July 17, but failed to advance much closer to São Paulo city. On the northern Minas Gerais front, about half of the government's 34,000-strong Eastern Group, including the 4th Division, broke through the defenses of some 7,000 rebels at Eleutério on August 26. By September, although the Legalistas were still far from reaching São Paulo city, the outnumbered and outgunned Constitutionalists were ready to surrender; a ceasefire was agreed on September 29, and fighting stopped on October 4.

The short-lived 1932 Revolution was relatively costly in lives: casualties were estimated at 1,050 Federal troops and 2,200 rebels. Another source quotes the Constitutionalist losses at between 630 and 1,000 dead, with the larger figure broken down into 353 volunteers, 249 regulars and 150 men from other states. President Vargas was shrewd enough to be magnanimous in victory, and his punishment of the defeated Constitutionalists was limited to sending 200 of their leaders into exile in Portugal.

OTHER CONFLICTS, 1932–1941

Peru & Colombia: the Leticia Incident, 1932–1933

In a typical border incident, the South American nations of Peru and Colombia went to war in 1932 over a remote stretch of empty jungle. A long-standing border dispute was supposed to have been settled in March 1922, when Peru agreed to the transfer of 2,250 square miles of

its territory on the Amazon to Colombia. This region, known as the "Leticia Trapezium," included 68 miles of the northern bank of the Amazon; since rivers played the major part in South American communications and commerce, river access was always a major factor in relations between states. The treaty was unpopular with nationalist Peruvians; it was not ratified until 1927, and opposition to it continued to rumble into the 1930s. On August 31, 1932, resentment against the treaty turned to conflict when a group of Peruvian nationalists took the little town of Leticia with its 500-strong population, and ejected its six-man Colombian "garrison."

To the Peruvian government's surprise, the Colombians were unwilling to accept this occupation, and prepared for war. At the outbreak of the conflict both armies were about equal in size, with 8,400 Colombian troops and 8,955 Peruvians. Getting any of these troops to the isolated theater of war was extremely difficult, however, and the army with the better supply lines would win.

This cadet from the Colombian military academy models full marching order; his cap is the stiffened type worn only by officers and officer cadets in the early 1930s. Ordinary Colombian soldiers (or indeed those of any Latin American army of the day) rarely received this level of equipment, complete with knapsack, water canteen, and entrenching tool, let alone a spare pair of boots. (Cody Images)

The Peruvian Army was better armed with machine guns and artillery, which included a few modern 20mm antiaircraft guns, but much of their weaponry, including rifles, dated from the early years of the century. The Peruvian force that was engaged during the Leticia Incident was estimated at 2,000 men, including large numbers of civilian volunteers; a number of regular Army officers were flown in to train and command these irregulars. The force began with four 75mm M1895 Krupp mountain guns, and efforts were made during the conflict to bring in more modern artillery from Lima. Initially Peru had the advantage in the air, with 60 Air Force and Navy aircraft, including Curtiss F11C Hawk and Vought 02U Corsair fighters, and acquired 16 others during the conflict.

Colombian soldiers man their trenches at the edge of the jungle during the fighting in the Leticia region. Their basic uniform comprises an unstiffened all-cloth field cap and a cotton tunic and trousers, all in light khaki. The short Mauser rifles could have come from a number of overseas sources, including Czechoslovakia and Belgium. (Cody Images)

The Colombian Army had about 32 ex-Austrian Schwarzlose heavy machine guns, some of which had had their water jackets removed. They also had a number of 75mm Skoda mountain guns and some modern 47mm Skoda antitank guns. At the start of the war the Colombians had 16 aircraft, but by the end they had acquired a further 82, largely civilian machines flown by mercenary pilots. Recognizing their lack of preparedness, the Colombians spent large sums on acquiring new equipment. This included several gunboats, which allowed them to get supplies up to their frontline troops via the river network. The effort of supplying the troops across vast distances of jungle country dominated the conduct of the campaign, and the Colombians' superior organization gave them the advantage.

Since they had no military presence in the disputed territory, the Colombians were slow to react, and Peruvian regulars and irregulars made further advances beyond Leticia. They took the only other town in the disputed territory, Tarapacá, and then dug in to await a Colombian response. It took Colombia until December 1932 to muster the necessary ships at the mouth of the Amazon under Gen Alfredo Vásquez. The war proper only began in early 1933, when his 1,000-strong Colombian force was finally transported up the Putomayo River in six vessels. They arrived at Tarapacá on February 14, when they were unsuccessfully bombed by Peruvian aircraft. The next day the Colombians retook the town almost without bloodshed, and then moved towards the Peruvian stronghold of Gueppi, whose capture on March 27 effectively ended the war.

Coincidentally, on April 30, President Luis Miguel Sánchez of Peru was assassinated in Lima, and his successor handed the dispute over to the League of Nations, which negotiated a peace on May 24. Both sides had suffered only minimal battle casualties: the Peruvians had apparently lost

OPPOSITE A group of Cuban rebels are seen here with their commander, Col Blas Hernandez, "the Sandino of Cuba" (right). Hernandez was in rebellion first against the pre-1933 Machado government, and then against Batista after September 1933. He was treacherously killed on Batista's orders on November 9, 1933 after surrendering. Here his men are armed with a mixture of Springfield M1903s, Krag-Jorgensen M1898s, pump-action shotguns, and a single Winchester repeater. (Cody Images)

25 killed and the Colombians 27. However, the dangers of campaigning in the rainforest were confirmed by a later Peruvian admission that they had also lost 800 men who died of disease.

ABOVE Peruvian troops in barracks at the time of the Leticia Incident, wearing standard service dress. The kepi is covered in light khaki cotton, and on the front of some a brass regimental number "5" can be made out. The number is repeated on the closed collars of the enlisted ranks' tunics; the officer (right) wears an open-collar tunic over a shirt and tie. (Cody Images)

Cuba: the 1933 Revolution

Since its independence from Spain in 1898, Cuba's government had been largely dominated by the USA, upon which its economy depended. Cuba had been ruled since 1925 by the unpopular regime of Gerardo Machado, and the already impoverished island was suffering the effects of the 1929 financial crash. Terrible conditions for Cuban workers led

in 1933 to a 200,000-strong rising by disgruntled sugar workers. This was quickly subdued by the Cuban Army, but Machado broke the cardinal rule of military dictators: he failed to look after the soldiers who kept him in power. Resentment built up, particularly over his preventing the progression of able NCOs to higher ranks.

On September 4, 1933, some of these NCOs led a mutiny at Camp Columbia near the capital, Havana. Under the leadership of Master Sgt Fulgencio Batista, the mutineers arrested senior officers. In Havana, a military junta overthrew Machado and tried to pre-empt the "Sergeants' Revolt." Batista and his determined followers bided their time, and took over from the junta a few months later in January 1934. Either as president himself, or as the power behind proxy leaders, Batista was to control Cuba until the 1959 Revolution led by Fidel Castro.

Cuban troops supporting M Sgt Batista's coup, which finally took over the government in January 1934. Their light khaki uniforms and felt campaign hats closely resemble those of the US Army, and their weapons are the Browning .30cal M1917A1 water-cooled machine gun, the Browning Automatic Rifle, and the Springfield M1903 rifle. At first the intelligent and charismatic Batista enjoyed popular support, but this waned as the corruption of his regime became legendary. (Cody Images)

Peru & Ecuador: the Zarumilla War, 1941

The Zarumilla War between Peru and Ecuador was the culmination of a 111-year-old border dispute between the two countries over territory along the Zarumilla River.

Since its defeat by Colombia in 1932–33 Peru had greatly improved its armed forces, and increased its army's strength to 25,000 men. (During the 1941 conflict the Ecuadorian press, eager to involve the USA on their side, made wild claims that there were 3,000 Japanese

officers and men serving in the Peruvian Army. Although there was indeed a sizable Japanese immigrant population in Peru in 1941, they were not allowed to serve in the military.) In the late 1930s Peru imported some modern heavy weaponry from Europe, particularly from Czechoslovakia; this included 24 CKD LTP38 light tanks and a reported 95 Praga T6 artillery tractors. From Italy they purchased aircraft, including Caproni Ca 135 and Ca 310 bombers and Ca 101 transports, and from the USA Douglas 8A-3P attack aircraft. The fighter force was equipped with Caproni Ca 114s and North American NA-50s.

The Peruvians trained hard for the expected war with Ecuador. During pre-war manoeuvers they particularly emphasized the use of

Peruvian troops at the time of the Zarumilla War, wearing Adrian helmets with a frontal plate showing the Peruvian sun emblem. During the 1941 war the Peruvians wore this gray-green temperate uniform and tropical light khakis, sometimes mixed side by side. The rifles are Peruvian Mausers, and the light machine gun is a Czechoslovakian ZB26. (Cody Images)

Peruvian motorcycle troops struggle through the mud during their advance in the Zarumilla river valley. The Adrian helmet had been introduced in the early 1930s. The only weapon visible here is the Peruvian M1891 rifle carried slung by the soldier on the left; this older model suggests that these are second-line troops. (Cody Images)

their two tank companies, which trained with the infantry units they were detailed to support. The Peruvian artillery had newly acquired Italian 75mm 75/32 and French Schneider 105mm field guns. The tracked Praga T6 artillery tractors did see action in 1941, but appear to have spent more time pulling trucks across rivers than in their intended role.

Following border skirmishes since 1938, on January 11, 1941, Peruvian President Manuel Prado ordered troop movements to create a Northern Army Detachment (under Gen Eloy Ureta). This would reach a strength of between 11,500 and 13,000, mainly in the 1st and 8th Light Infantry Divisions (with three and one infantry battalions respectively, and each with an artillery group and an engineer company). Units under direct command added two cavalry regiments, another artillery group, and the tank companies.

Although the total strength of the Ecuadorian Army in 1941 was 700 officers and 6,800 men, only 1,724 troops were involved in the 1941 war. When the fighting broke out, the Army Border Command (LtCol Octavio Ochoa) stationed in the disputed territory of El Oro province comprised the Cayambe Battalion, with 266 men assigned to defend eight military posts, and the Montecristi Battalion, with just 219 men spread between nine posts. There was also a "Machala Company" of some 500 policemen, which was given a military role during the fighting, and another 55 men as a sort of reserve. Mixed in with these units were elements of the Cordova Engineer Battalion and a battery of mountain artillery.

An Italian military mission had been in Ecuador for several years and provided artillery and engineer instructors. The Army had few heavy weapons; elderly Italian 65mm mountain guns proved inadequate, though they had imported some modern Breda 20mm antiaircraft guns. Other weapons purchased since 1910 were now worn out or had been

Rare photograph of Ecuadorian troops in barracks shortly before the Zarumilla War. Enlisted ranks wear gray cotton shirts, trousers, and sidecaps. Officers are distinguished by high-fronted service caps; some wear gray uniforms, others summer white. Under magnification, an Ecuadorian flag seems to carry the name "Machala Company," which was a unit made up of militarized policemen. (Cody Images)

lost during civil wars in 1912 and 1913–16. The Ecuadorian air arm had only a handful of Italian INAM Ro37 reconnaissance-attack machines; these were poorly maintained, and no Ecuadorian aircraft saw combat in 1941.

Both sides blame the other for firing the first shot, but small-scale border clashes led to the invasion of southern Ecuador on July 5, 1941, by the Peruvian Northern Army Detachment. As expected, the three-week war was a one-sided affair, with Peruvian armor, artillery, and air power overcoming brave but futile resistance. Peruvian columns soon reached their objectives, while a small force of paratroopers captured the strategic Puerto Bolivar – the first combat use of paratroopers in the Americas. Peruvian river gunboats also supported the invasion, with little opposition from the ineffective Ecuadorian Navy.

The main fighting ended after the Peruvians had captured the towns of Machala, Puerto Bolivar, and Pasaje, along with a number of villages in the disputed zone. Ecuadorian President Carlos Arroyo del Rio, threatened by unrest in Quito, could not release reinforcements for the front, and requested a ceasefire, which came into effect on July 31. Guerrilla clashes continued, but the end of all hostilities in September left the Peruvians in control of the province of El Oro and large parts of two other southern provinces. After mediation by Argentina, Brazil, and the USA, the Peruvians were left in "temporary" control, and the Rio Protocol of January 29, 1942 awarded Peru 80,000 square miles of former Ecuadorian territory. Not surprisingly, later Ecuadorian governments refused to recognize this settlement; border clashes recurred in 1981 and 1995, and peace was not finally concluded until October 1998.

Casualties in the 1941 war were relatively light, with the Ecuadorians suffering a reported 148 dead and 235 wounded and the Peruvians

Czechoslovakian-made CKD LTP38 light tanks of the Peruvian Army during a training exercise in preparation for the 1941 war with Ecuador. This 7.5-ton tank was powered by a 125hp petrol engine, and mounted two light machine guns and a Skoda 37mm PUV main gun capable of penetrating 40mm of armor at 800 yards; its own maximum armor protection was 25mm. These tanks seem to be camouflaged in green and light khaki. Note the triangular (company ?) insignia on the turret, and names on the hull sides. The background tank seems to invoke the Virgin – "Madre de Dios."

The Peruvian land, sea, and air assault on the Ecuadorian Army was described by observers as "a Blitzkrieg in miniature"; the few thousand poorly equipped Ecuadorians had no chance against up to 13,000 well-armed Peruvians. (Cody Images)

Peruvian Civil Guard motorcyclists photographed during 1941, when the Civil Guard played a major policing role in former Ecuadorian territory. Note the mixture of gray-green and khaki uniforms. Some sources state that their Adrian helmets were painted dark blue with a gold Civil Guard badge. To emphasize their elite status, all these men are armed with the Steyr-Solothurn MP34 submachine gun. (Cody Images)

losing 84 dead and 72 wounded. The numbers who died from disease on both sides were not recorded, but sources suggest that they reached at least several hundred. Ecuadorian civilian casualties were also unrecorded but are again estimated to have been significant, as the inhabitants tried to escape Peruvian occupation. The war was a military disaster for Ecuador, which lost a large part of what little heavy weaponry it possessed, including nine of the Breda 20mm guns. Its army was not in a position to restart hostilities even when its numbers were expanded to 12,000 in 1942.

RIGHT Peruvian paratroopers pose with a Caproni Ca 101 before a training jump in November 1940; they belong to the 20-strong unit which was preparing for the coming war with Ecuador. A single stick of six took part in the capture of Puerto Bolivar in late July 1941, although according to the Peruvian press of the time the town had been taken by a "division of parachutists." The men wear light khaki jump suits with their Air Force ranks displayed on black cloth shoulder straps, cloth flying helmets, and US-style leggings. (Author's collection)

PLATE COMMENTARIES

Uniforms and equipment

The uniforms worn by the various armies during the Central America Wars before 1914 were largely improvised due to the extreme poverty of these countries. Headgear in Latin American armies generally might be various styles of kepis, shakos, or "stetson"-type hats, but in Central America it was normally limited to straw hats. The cotton shirts and trousers were often the soldiers' civilian clothing, and telling the combatants apart was difficult; even though ribbons were displayed on hats and elsewhere (see Plate A), the similarity of national colors still presented a problem. White armbands were worn as distinguishing field signs on more than one occasion. During the civil war in Honduras in 1911 the forces of President Davila wore red-and-white armbands, while the rebel supporters of Gen Bonilla wore blue-and-white.

In contrast to their men, officers drawn from the wealthy land-owning classes often wore gaudy dress uniforms with gold braid, gilt buttons, and dress swords. Not all enlisted ranks' uniforms in Central America were plain, however, as exemplified by one Nicaraguan unit controlled by the US adventurer Sam Dreben. Given command of what was described as an "army" but was probably a battalion at most, he tried his best to motivate the soldiers that he "drilled, cussed, fed and paid," but with little success. After some thought, he decided to promote every soldier by one rank, so that there were no privates; he then at his own expense "outfitted them in splendid uniforms trimmed with gold braid." An eyewitness said they looked like the men's chorus in the operetta *The Student Prince*, but apparently they proceeded to fight like tigers.

In the 1920–30s many Latin American soldiers wore a simple cotton uniform complete with a cheap visored (peaked) cap. Such caps were worn without a stiffened band or crown by the Colombian, Ecuadorian, Paraguayan, El Salvadorian, and Bolivian armies (e.g. see Plate G3), and with stiffened crowns by the Guatemalan, Brazilian, and Mexican armies (see B1). Another form of cheap but practical headgear was the floppy cotton sun hat worn by the Paraguayan Army after 1932, and a similar type worn by some Mexican troops on campaign. Argentinean troops also wore a soft canvas sun hat during the summer in the 1930s and 1940s, and the Brazilian Army made wide use of a "canvas helmet" in the early 1930s (see Plate F3). US campaign hats were worn by the armies of Haiti, Cuba, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic, as well as by the Panamanian National Guard. Other headgear employed from the 1930s included cork sun helmets of various styles, which were worn mainly by officers. The Mexicans had adopted a gray cork helmet as part of their 1923 regulations, but this was not widely worn.

During this period most Central American and some South American armies wore simple cotton tunics, with tapered trousers and either puttees or gaiters. More expensive uniforms were normally confined to presidential guards and officer cadets. Many of these elite units wore German-style *pickelhaube* helmets with dress uniforms, showing the influence of Prussian military advisors in many Latin American armies during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. From the mid-1930s Latin American armies began to standardize their uniforms, and the wearing of steel helmets became common. The French Adrian helmet in M1915 and M1926 models was worn by the Mexican, Peruvian (see Plate H1), and Uruguayan armies; the German M16 by the Colombians; the Czech M1934 helmet by the Chilean Army; the Swiss M1918 by the Argentinians; and the British Mk I M1915 by the Guatemalans and Cubans. The Ecuadorians used two models of Italian steel helmets, the M1915 Adrian style and the M33 (see Plate H2). In 1932, Brazil adopted a light fiber helmet based on the Adrian, but its protective properties were negligible.

A: CENTRAL AMERICAN WARS, 1900–1911

A1: Private, Honduran Army; Namasique, 1907

This Honduran soldier resembles in most respects his counterparts in the Nicaraguan, Guatemalan, and El Salvadorian armies, though he does wear a simple kepi-style cap with a ribbon bow in the colors of Honduras sewn on the front. The dirty white and/or ticking *rayadillo* jacket and trousers were fairly universal wear in Central American armies; they were usually worn with sandals or canvas shoes, but many soldiers went barefoot. Equipment is rudimentary, with a simple canvas haversack to carry his kit and a few spare cartridges; he is fortunate to have been issued with a Winchester M1895 rifle. Hundreds of his comrades were slaughtered during the battle of Namasique in March 1907, when they were caught in a killing zone created by Nicaraguan Gatling and Maxim guns manned largely by American mercenaries. In the background is a 37mm 1-pdr Hotchkiss revolving cannon, which was also used to deadly effect by the Nicaraguans at Namasique.

A2: Tracy Richardson; Nicaraguan Army, 1909

Aged only 20 in 1909, Richardson was one of the US adventurers who fought in the many wars in Central America in the early years of the century. He was employed for his expertise in the firing and maintenance of machine guns, and is illustrated with a Colt-Browning M1895 "potato digger," so called from its unusual under-lever action which was said to resemble that type of agricultural machinery. Richardson wears his own clothing, probably from US Army surplus stocks following the Spanish-American War, including a campaign hat; the only Nicaraguan identifying features are blue-and-white ribbons. For personal protection he carried a holstered revolver.

A3: Private, El Salvadorian Army, 1906

This standard-bearer seen during the short war with Guatemala in 1906 carries a flag of the design used from the 1870s until 1912, when El Salvador introduced the present-day flag. He is wearing typical improvised Central American uniform of the period. His straw hat is a civilian item, but may have been purchased for him by his commander, along with its red, blue, and white ribbon; he has also sewn a piece of tricolor ribbon to his shirt. Equipment was in short supply, but as well as his machete he has managed to acquire a US Army surplus haversack. The single-shot Remington M1897 "rolling-block" rifle was in service with just about every Central American army of the time; it was simple, effective, and more or less "soldier-proof." Remingtons were produced in several

calibers between 8mm and 12.7mm, but surplus Spanish rifles in 11mm were presumably the most common in Latin America.

B: MEXICAN REBELLIONS, 1920s

B1: Machine-gunner, 70th Regiment, Federal Army, 1924

During the 1920s the Federal Army was in almost constant turmoil, and the uniforms worn on campaign often lagged behind the dress regulations. This private wears a newly issued light gray-green cap with a red-white-green metal cockade, and the brass crossed rifles infantry branch-badge. (In some photographs the cap bears small brass numerals in place of the crossed rifles.) His tunic and trousers are the older light khaki cotton type, worn with canvas gaiters and leather boots. The two pouch belts (one US webbing, one Spanish-style leather) carry clips for his rifle, which he has left in barracks while operating the Madsen M1902 light machine gun, of which numbers were imported during the Revolution of 1910–20.

Two legendary US Marines photographed between two Nicaraguan National Guardsmen (both the latter armed with Thompson M1928A1 submachine guns) during the Sandino Rebellion: 1st Lt Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller (second left) and Sgt William "Iron Man" Lee, both displaying the triangular hat badge of the *Guardia Nacional*. Puller, who began his career seconded to the Haitian Gendarmerie in 1919–24, served in Nicaragua in 1928–31 and 1932–33. His World War II campaigns would include Guadalcanal and Cape Gloucester (7th Marines) and Peleliu (1st Marines). After commanding the 1st Marines at Inchon and the Chosin Reservoir in Korea, he would finally retire in 1955 as a lieutenant-general and the most decorated US Marine in history, with five Navy Crosses and the Army's Distinguished Service Cross. (US National Archives)

B2: *Cristero* commander, 1927

Most officers in the Catholic *Cristero* rebel army were from the landowning classes, and this one has the funds to buy a superior quality sombrero, which he has decorated with two silver Catholic charms: a simple cross, and an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe. His faith is also proclaimed by the cross around his neck, and the white neckerchief usually worn by *Cristero* officers. The clothing is civilian, but his black leather gaiters and boots are probably left over from his service during the revolution. Unlike many of his men, the officer is well-armed with a Smith & Wesson .44 revolver in a tooled leather holster and a captured Federal Army Mauser M1895 carbine.

B3: *Soldadera*, Federal Army; Sonora, 1927

This female volunteer, serving alongside her male comrades during the Yaqui Rebellion, was photographed during a desert campaign. Female soldiers often began their careers as camp followers, but during the 1910s and 1920s they were also seen in the frontline, sometimes replacing husbands who had been killed in battle. After 1920 there were government attempts to separate these *soldaderas* from any frontline role, but when a garrison was under threat of Indian attack they would be issued with rifles. This apparent veteran sports a Mexican tricolor rosette on her locally made sun hat to show her status; otherwise she wears civilian clothing, but carries a Mauser M1910 rifle and ammunition bandoliers, plus an old tin water canteen.

C: CENTRAL AMERICA & CUBA, 1920–1930s

C1: Volunteer, Costa Rican Army; Coto War, 1921

The Coto War of July 1921 between Panama and Costa Rica was typical of Central American border disputes; fought between the small forces of impoverished nations, it involved many patriotic but ill-equipped volunteers. This Costa Rican soldier wears a very basic uniform made up of bits and pieces, with a length of tricolor ribbon sewn to his turned-up hat brim. Photographs show soldiers heading for the front with various bags attached with string instead of military packs; this man carries his minimal personal kit inside his blanket roll, and a few rounds for his Remington rifle in his jacket pocket. Although the Costa Ricans had more modern Mauser rifles in their armories, the Remington was still in service. While the Costa Rican Army was in a relatively poor state, the Panamanian force they were fighting was even worse.

C2: Captain of Engineers, Guatemalan Army, 1920

While most Central American armies in the 1920s were small, they usually had a military academy which trained the limited number of officers they needed. This captain of the Guatemalan Army is wearing one of the smarter service uniforms of the period, with visored cap, tunic, and breeches. On the front of his olive-green cap is a gilt national coat-of-arms badge, and his rank is indicated by three gold stripes around the cap band and three bars above the tunic cuffs. The Engineers collar badges are in the form of the castle symbol used by many armies for this branch, for which Guatemalan regulations specified a blue sword-knot. Brown leather gaiters and boots appear to have been in common use with the Guatemalan Army in the 1920s and 1930s.

C3: Corporal of Cavalry, Cuban Army, 1933
This NCO is taking part in the "Sergeants' Revolt" of September 1933 which eventually led to the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. His uniform copies that of the US Army, including a hat with the yellow cord and "acorns" of the cavalry branch, below the Army badge of the national coat-of-arms. He displays the crossed sabers of this branch on his collars, and on his shirt sleeves the two black chevrons of his rank. Riding breeches are worn with the mounted version of the leather gaiters, which laced up the front; the dismounted version laced at the side. At this date the Cuban Army was relatively well armed from US sources, including with this recently supplied M1918 Browning Automatic Rifle, complete with the canvas and web belt with pouches for its 20-round magazines and a cleaning kit.

D: NICARAGUA: SANDINO REBELLION, 1926–1934
D1: Volunteer, *Guardia Voluntarios*, 1929
Many Nicaraguans opposed the *Sandinista* rebels and took up arms to resist them; this is a member of the Volunteer Guard (GV), a force raised to support the National Guard and also issued with US surplus uniforms. This volunteer's M1902 campaign hat has the white cloth tied around the band which served as a field sign to distinguish the GV from their enemies. His light khaki cotton M1912 summer uniform displays on the upper left sleeve a blue-white-blue ribbon sewn on to form an inverted "V" for *Voluntarios*. Note that his shoes are worn out, and his equipment is limited to a canvas bag for small personal kit and spare ammunition. Apart from a few National Guard units, the Nicaraguans fighting alongside the US Marines were issued old M1898 Krag-Jorgensen rifles. This volunteer has a traditional Nicaraguan blanket over his shoulder, for use at night when in the field.
D2: *Sandinista* officer, 1928
As an officer, this man is one of the better dressed and armed of the Nicaraguan insurgents. His stetson hat has the red-over-black ribbon which identifies the *Sandinistas*, as does his red neckerchief. His civilian clothing would have worn out quickly in the humid jungles; his boots are war-booty taken from the body of a Nicaraguan National Guard officer. Sandino's guerrillas also relied very largely on capturing their enemies' weapons. This officer is unusual in having one of the prized M1928A1 Thompson submachine guns captured during skirmishes with the National Guard, and also a Smith & Wesson M1917 revolver, though shortage of .45 ACP caliber ammunition would have forced him to use both of them sparingly.
D3: Guardsman, *Guardia Nacional*, 1927
The Nicaraguan National Guard was raised by the USMC to help in the fight against Sandino, and was trained, dressed, armed, and usually commanded by US Marines. This guardsman wears a US surplus campaign hat with the triangular brass badge featuring the embossed Nicaraguan coat-of-arms. On the left sleeve of his light khaki shirt he has his service's diamond-shaped blue patch with the white letters "GN." His breeches, gaiters, and boots are all US Marine surplus, as is his rifle belt with clip-pouches for the .30cal Springfield M1903, which was issued to only a few select GN units. He also has a US Marine-pattern water canteen.

E: BRAZILIAN REBELLIONS, 1920s
E1: Federal Policeman, Alagoas State, 1927
Brazil in the 1920–30s was not only disturbed by Army rebellions and regional revolutions; it also suffered from endemic banditry. This para-military policeman in Alagoas state is on an operation against the famous bandit leader Lampiao, who led his group for over 20 years, being regarded by some as a "Robin Hood" hero and by others as a cold-blooded murderer. The policeman sports on the front of his Brazilian leather hat a rosette in the state colors of Alagoas. The bandana and neckerchief are in the green favored both by some bandits and their opponents. His old Federal Army-issue tunic displays the single right arm chevron of an NCO, but is worn with civilian trousers and moccasins. To complete his "Pancho Villa" look, he is adorned with cartridge bandoliers for his Brazilian M1922 Mauser carbine. He carries his personal kit in a canvas bag, and tucked into his belt is a traditional bone-handled knife.
E2: Standard-bearer, "*Columna da Morte*," 1924
This rebel subaltern is serving with the "Death Column" led by Lt J. Cabanas during the "Lieutenants' Rebellion" of 1922–26; the design of the flag is self-explanatory. This unit took part in the epic march by the Prestes Column, which lasted for more than two years and covered thousands of miles. He is wearing the light khaki uniform worn by many Brazilian Army officers in the 1920s, and is only distinguished from Federal troops by his red neckerchief. His *pampa* hat was also in widespread use by Brazilian troops, especially the cavalry. Although his equipment is basic, he has a "Sam Browne"-type belt to carry the Brazilian officers' issue Luger DWM M1906 semi-automatic pistol, which replaces the usual carbine in his role as standard-bearer.
E3: Lancer, *Gaucho* Army; Rio Grande do Sul, 1923
Gauchos are the cattle-herding horsemen of the Pampas plains which extend over Argentina, Uruguay, and southern Brazil; in the latter country, their regional loyalties and independent attitude led them to rebel against the Federal government on a number of occasions during the 1920s. This veteran irregular lancer from the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul is serving with the "army" of Gen Honório Lemes da Silva, whose troops would later be briefly allied with the Prestes Column against their mutual enemy, the Brazilian government. His traditional clothes provide uniformity of a sort, with a gray *pampa* hat, one of a variety of colored checked shirts, baggy woolen trousers, and soft leather boots with rowel spurs. The red neckerchief, and the scarf hanging from his hat down to his shoulders, were other features of Brazilian gaucho dress. These men were described as being armed with out-of-date weaponry, often limited to the lance; this example has a pennant in the green, red, and yellow state colors of Rio Grande do Sul. This rider has also managed to acquire a revolver, even if it is an old percussion Colt of American Civil War vintage.

F: BRAZILIAN REVOLUTIONS, 1930s
F1: Private, 2nd Infantry Regiment, Federal Army, 1930
The Brazilian Army in the early 1930s wore a uniform which had remained largely unchanged for over ten years. This private's visored cap has the crossed-rifles badge of the

infantry branch on its bottle-green band, and his light khaki cotton tunic displays the regimental numeral "2" on the collar. His tapered trousers are confined by gaiters; Brazilian Army regulations mention both brown and black leather gaiters and boots during the 1915–32 period. Equipment varied greatly; this soldier wears the older gray-green canvas web set, with three ammunition pouches on either side. He also carries a backpack with a strapped-on blanket roll, a "bread bag" in gray-green canvas, and a large black metal canteen covered with light khaki material. Various models of Mauser rifle were used by the Federal Army; this soldier has an M1908, which was acquired from the Czech company CZ in 1925.

F2: Standard-Bearer, *Forca Publica*; Constitutionalist forces, 1932

Alongside the mutinous 2nd Division of the Federal Army, the São Paulo state militia termed the *Forca Publica* provided most of the rebels' manpower during the 1932 "Constitutionalist" Revolution in that state. This state flag of São Paulo was often flown alongside the Brazilian national flag: the rebel leaders insisted that their struggle was not for secession but for national reform. The "Paulistas" produced most of their own uniforms, and also manufactured three models of steel helmet. This example is a simple copy of the French Adrian M1915, while the other two were based on the British Mk I, and a variation of the Adrian with a domed "pommel" on the top instead of a fore-and-aft crest. The white scarf was a universal sign of the "Paulista" volunteers, and on his right breast pocket this man sports a small enameled badge featuring the coat-of-arms of São Paulo between the letters "SP." He has also pinned to his jacket the medal showing that he had previously participated in the 1930 Revolution. The black gaiters and boots are locally made, as is his belt-and-suspender equipment in light khaki canvas. He has been issued a Mauser C96 semi-automatic pistol (or a Spanish-made Astra copy), which he carries from a shoulder belt.

F3: Volunteer, "Black Legion"; Constitutionalist forces, 1932

Slavery had survived late in Brazil, and society was strictly divided along racial lines in the 1930s, so the formation of an Afro-Brazilian unit in the rebel forces was ground-breaking. All of the personnel of the company-sized Legion were Afro-Brazilians, including officers, doctors, and nurses. This volunteer is wearing the *capacete de lona* or "canvas helmet"; it could be worn pulled down, as here, or with the brim partly pinned or buttoned up. On the front of this man's hat is a pin badge featuring the crossed flags of São Paulo and Brazil. The rest of his uniform is a locally made shirt, trousers, and leather gaiters and boots. The white neckerchief worn by F2 seems to have been removed for combat; it was worn on parade, when Federal troops often wore a red equivalent. Equipment is again locally made apart from the canteen, which is Brazilian Army issue. He is armed with a Czechoslovakian-supplied VZ24 rifle and two locally-produced Mills-type hand grenades. The one on his belt is the standard model, while he holds one adapted to turn it into a stick grenade.

G: THE LETICIA INCIDENT, 1932–1933

G1: Lieutenant, Colombian Light Artillery, 1932

This officer's cork sun helmet, purchased from English suppliers, has a cockade badge in the Colombian national colors (yellow/blue/red center) on the front. Other photographs show the cadets of the military academy in the capital, Bogota, wearing Italian colonial cork helmets. On his light khaki cotton tunic his rank is identified by two five-point gold stars on the shoulder straps. Breeches of the same material are worn with US-made high laced boots. Officers bought their own equipment, including sidearms. The binoculars are a US Army model purchased from an officers' outfitters in Bogota; the same source would have supplied the "Sam Browne" belt and the Spanish 9mm Astra semi-automatic pistol.

G2: Senior private, *Brigada Mixta de Montana*, Peruvian Army, 1933

Much of the fighting by the Peruvians during the Leticia Incident was done by civilian volunteers, police, and civil guards, but this soldier belongs to one of the regular units, the Mixed Mountain Brigade. Photographs are rare, but this private is wearing the standard uniform. Both officers and men wore a kepi in the early 1930s, but for the former it was made to superior quality. Many were adapted for summer campaigning by the addition of long neck curtains. In major units the front of the kepi bore the regimental number, but it was often left plain; in this case it displays small rank bars. His light khaki cotton jacket and trousers are worn with darker woolen puttees and brown leather boots. The brown leather equipment has German-style ammunition pouches and a belt plate bearing the embossed Peruvian coat-of-arms. He has fitted the bayonet to his Peruvian Mauser M1909 rifle.

G3: Private, Colombian Army, 1933

The Colombians committed more regular troops to the Leticia region than their Peruvian opponents. This private wears the commonly seen field cap in its basic form, without stiffening and with a cloth visor; better quality caps had a leather visor and bore a metal national cockade (as G1). The light cotton tunic with concealed buttons and no breast pockets was the most common type in use in the ranks; trousers might be worn with puttees or, as here, black high-laced boots. His brown leather equipment is again of German style, and here includes a knapsack, bread bag, canteen, and waterproofed canvas groundsheet. The rifle is a Steyr-Mauser M1929.

H: THE ZARUMILLA WAR, 1941

H1: Corporal, Peruvian Army

The Peruvian Army appears to have worn a mixture of uniforms in 1941. The regulation dress was of gray-green gabardine cloth, but many troops wore a lightweight version, and others light khaki cotton. The latter may have been a fatigue uniform, but there is no official confirmation of this. This soldier is wearing the Adrian M1926 steel helmet with the Peruvian sun emblem on the front. On the sleeve of his gray-green gabardine jacket he displays his rank stripe in the light blue branch-color of the infantry. Gabardine trousers are worn with woolen puttees and standard brown leather boots. The weight of the German-style ammunition pouches on his leather belt is supported by Y-straps. Some photographs show Peruvian troops using British surplus web items, and his canteen and backpack are from that source. Hanging from his belt is the bayonet scabbard for his Peruvian FN-Mauser M1935 rifle.

H2: Corporal, Ecuadorian Army

The Ecuadorian troops also wore a mixture of uniforms. Ecuador had only a few regular units in theater, and this soldier belongs to one of the best equipped. Some wore this Italian M33 steel helmet painted in its original Italian *grigioverde* shade; a few existing examples have a large national roundel (blue/yellow/red center) painted on the right side, but this may have been added at a later date. Other soldiers in 1941 wore a "stetson"-type hat, and some continued to wear the visored field cap that was widely used in the 1930s. Some references say that the shirt and trousers usually came in olive-green, but this soldier wears them in gray-green cotton. With service dress, white shirts and black ties were usually worn, as were high black boots. One source describes some NCO ranks worn above the left breast pocket, in the form of one to three stars on a rectangular patch. This man has the US web equipment adopted in the early 1930s and still in service with some in 1941. Several license-built types of Mauser rifles were in use, including this short FN-Mauser M1934.

H3: Tank commander, Peruvian Tank Companies

During the Zarumilla War the Peruvian Army fielded all 24 of its prized CKD LTP38 light tanks. The three-man crews wore Czechoslovakian light olive-green overalls, usually with a leather crash helmet, though this tank commander has replaced his with a more comfortable cork sun helmet while out of the line. Peruvian cork helmets came in several models; this one is the Italian type used by that army since 1935, and bears both the enameled national cockade (red/white/red) and the Army's cap badge. Note the pair of small brass armored-branch tank collar badges on his overalls. His M1936 binoculars are also from a Czechoslovakian source; his sidearm is a Ballester-Molina semi-automatic pistol, an Argentinian copy of the Colt M1911A1.

A heavily armed Guatemalan government troop train, photographed during a revolution in 1929, bristles with rifles and has a 75mm mountain gun mounted on a flatcar. The dismounted light gun is a Hotchkiss 42mm (1.65in) M1875, sold off as US Army surplus. The Guatemalan Army was one of the strongest in Central America in the 1920s–30s, with about 6,600 troops. Unusually for armies of that region, these officers and soldiers alike all wear reasonably complete and smart uniforms and equipment, with stiffened visored caps. (Cody Images)

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Dedication

To Paul V. Walsh, a military historian whose encouragement and extensive research on my behalf has been invaluable to me over many years.

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Author's Note

This book covers some of the wars and rebellions that took place in Latin America in the first 40 years of the 20th century. Two of the larger conflicts during this period have already been covered by Osprey, and readers may wish to study them in conjunction with this title: Elite 137, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1920,* and Men-At-Arms 474, *The Chaco War 1932–35*, describing the major war between Bolivia and Paraguay.

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